88. ab. 10

ΕΝ ΟΛΙΓΩ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΟΣ

THE

ALMOST CHRISIAN

DISCOVERED:

OR, THE

FALSE PROFESSOR

Tryed and Cast.

Being the Substance of Seven

SERMONS.

First Preached at *Sepulchers*, *London*, 1661. And now at the Importunity of Friends made Publick.

By *MATTHEW MEADE*.

Luk. 16. 14. *And the Pharisees who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him.*

Ver. 15. *And Jesus said unto them, ye are they which justifie your selves before men, but God knoweth your hearts: For that which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.*

London, Printed by *J. Best*, for *Thomas Parkhurst*, at the three Crowns at the lower end of *Cheapside*, over against the great Conduit, 1664.

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To the Congregation at *Sepulchers*, that were the Auditors of theſe Sermons;

Grace and Peace be multiplyed.

Beloved,

WHat the meaning of that Providence was, that called me to the occupation of my Talent amongſt you this Summer, will be beſt read and underſtood by the effects of it upon your own Souls; The kindly encreaſe of grace and holineſs in heart and life, can only prove it to have been in mercy; where there is not the fruit of the word, there it becomes a judgement. The Word travels with life or death, ſalvation or damnation, and bringeth forth one or other in every ſoul that hears it; I would not for a world (were it in my power to make the

choice) *that my labours, which were meant and deſigned for the promotion of your immortal ſouls, to the glory of the other world, in a preſent purſuance of the things of your peace ſhould be found to have been a* Miniſtration of Death and Condemnation, *in the great day of Jeſus Chriſt. Yet this* (*the Lord knoweth*) *is the too common effect of the moſt plain and powerful preaching of the Goſpel. The* waters of the Sanctuary *do not always heal where they come; for there are* mirie and mariſh places that ſhall be given to Salt למלח נתנו *The ſame word* (למח) *is elſewhere in Scripture rendred* barrenneſs, *he* turneth a fruitful land (למלחה) into barrenneſs; *ſo that the judgement denounced upon theſe miry and mariſh places, is that the* curſe *of* barrenneſs *ſhall reſt upon them, notwithſtanding the* waters of the Sanctuary *overflow them.*

Ezek. 47. 11.

Pſa. 107. 34.

It is ſad, but certain, that the Goſpe inflicteth a death of its own, as well as the Law; or elſe how are thoſe

those Trees in Jude *said to be* δὶς ἀποθανόντα, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. *Yea that which in it self is the greatest mercy, through the interposition of mens lusts, and the efficacy of this cursed sin of unbelief, turneth to the greatest judgement, as the richest and most generous Wine makes the sharpest Vinegar. Our Lord Christ himself, the choicest mercy that the bowels of a God could bless a perishing world withal, whose coming (himself bearing witness) was on no less errand then that of eternal life and blessedness to the lost and cursed sons of* Adam: *yet to how many was he* אבן נגף רצור מב סיול a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence; *Yea,* a gin and a snare *and that to both the* houses of Israel, *the only professing people of God at that day, in the World. And is he not a stone of stumbling in the Ministry of the Gospel to many professors to this very day, upon which they fall, and are broken? When he saith,* Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me; *he doth therein plainly suppose, that both in his person and Doctrine the*

Jude 12. Rom. 5. 8 Joh. 3. 16. Joh. 10. 10 Isa. 2. 14. Mat. 11. 6.

generality of men would be offended in him.

Not that this is the deſign of Chriſt and the Goſpel, but it comes ſo to paſs through the corruptions of the hearts of men, whereby they make light of Chriſt, and ſtand out againſt that life and grace which the Lord Jeſus by his blood ſo dearly purchaſed, and is by the preaching of the Goſpel ſo freely tendred; the wilful refuſal whereof, will as ſurely double our damnation, as the acceptance thereof will ſecure our eternal ſalvation.

Oh conſider it is a thing of the moſt ſerious concernment in the World, how we carry our ſelves under the Goſpel, and with what diſpoſitions and affections of heart and ſoul, ſeaſons of grace are entertained; this being taken into the conſideration to make it weight, that we are the nearer to Heaven or to Hell, to Salvation or Damnation, by every Ordinance we ſit under: Boaſt not therefore of Priviledges enjoyed, with neglect of the important duties thereby

Mat. 11. 23 *required. Remember* Capernaums

caſe,

case, and tremble: As many go to Heaven by the very gates of Hell, so more go to Hell by the gates of Heaven, in that the number of them that profess Christ, is greater than the number of them that truly close with Christ.

Beloved, I know the Preaching of the Gospel hath proselyted many of you into a Profession; But I fear that but few of you are brought by it to a true close with the Lord Christ for salvation (I beseech you bear with my jealousie, for it is the fruit of a tender love to your precious souls) most men are good Christians in the verdict of their own opinion, but you know the Law alloweth no man to be a Witness in his own case, because their affection usually out-acteth conscience, and self-love balketh Truth for its own interest.

The heart of man is the greatest Impostor and Cheat in the World; God himself adjusts it, Jer. 17.9. The heart is deceitful above all things. *Some of the deceits whereof, you will find discovered in this* Treatise, *which* הלב מבלעק *Supplantativum cor pra omni.*

ſheweth you that every grace hath its counterfeit; and that the higheſt Profeſſion may be, where true Converſion is not.

The Deſign hereof, is not to break
Mat. 12. 20 the bruiſed Reed, nor to quench the ſmoaking Flax; *not to diſcourage the weakeſt Believer, but to awaken Formal Profeſſors. I would not ſad the*
Ezek. 13. 22. *heart of any,* whom God would not have made ſad; *though I know it is hard to rip up the dangerous Eſtate and condition of a profeſſing Hypocrite; but that the weak Chriſtian will think himſelf concerned in the diſcovery. And therefore as I preached a Sermon on Sincerity among you, for the Support and Encouragement of ſuch, at the end of this; ſo I did purpoſe to have Printed it with this: But who can be Maſter of his own Purpoſes, that is (as I am) under ſuch daily variety of Providences! your kindly Acceptation of this, will make me a debter for that.*

The Dedication hereof, belongs to you on a double Account; for as it had not been preached, but that love to your Souls cauſed it; ſo it had much leſs

been

been Printed, but that your importunate deſire procured it: And therefore what Entertainment ſoever it findeth in the world, yet I hope I may expect you will welcom it, eſpecially conſidering it was born under your Roof, and therefore hopes to find Favour in your Eyes, and Room in your Hearts.

Accept it, I beſeech you, as a publick Acknowledgement of the Engagements which your great, and (I think I may ſay) unparallel'd Reſpects have laid me under, which I can no way compenſate, but by my prayers; and if you will take them for ſatisfaction, I do promiſe to be your Remembrancer at the Throne of Grace, whilſt I am

Matthew Meade.

To the Reader.

Reader,

I Know how cuſtomary it is for men to aſcend the publick ſtage, with premiſed Apologies, for the weakneſs and unworthineſs of their labours, which is an Argument that their deſires (either for the ſake of others profit, or their own credit, or both,) are ſtretched beyond the tedder of their abilities; and that they covet to commend themſelves to the Worlds cenſure, in a better dreſs than common infirmity will allow; for my own part I may truly ſay with *Gideon*, *Behold my thouſand is the meaneſt* (my Talent is the ſmalleſt) *and I am the leaſt in my Fathers Houſe*; and therefore this appearance in publick is not the fruit of my own choice, which would rather have been in

אלפי דלי

Judg. 6. 15

ſome

ſome other ſubject, wherein I ſtand in ſome ſence indebted to the World, or elſe in ſomewhat more digeſted, and poſſibly better fitted for common acceptation; but this is but to conſult the intereſt of a mans own name, which in matters of this concern, is no better than a *ſowing to the fleſh*, and the harveſt of ſuch a ſeeds time will be *in corruption*. Gal. 6. 8.

Thou haſt here one of the ſaddeſt conſiderations imaginable preſented to thee, and that is how far it is poſſible a man may go in a profeſſion of Religion, and yet after all fall ſhort of Salvation; How far he may run, and yet not *ſo run as to obtain*; this I ſay is ſad, but not ſo ſad as true, for our Lord Chriſt doth plainly atteſt it, *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate, for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.* 1 Cor. 9. 14. Luk. 13. 14.

My deſign herein is that the formal ſleepy Profeſſor may be awakened, and the cloſe Hypocrite diſcovered; but my fear is, That weak Believers may be hereby diſcouraged; for as it is hard to ſhew how low

a child of *God* may fall into ſin, & yet have true grace, but that the Sinner will be apt thereupon to preſume; ſo it is as hard to ſhew how high a Hypocrite may riſe in a Profeſſion, and yet have no grace, but that the Believer will be apt thereupon to deſpond. The prevention whereof, I have carefully indeavoured, by ſhewing, That though a man may go thus far, & yet be but *Almoſt a Chriſtian*; yet a man may fall ſhort of this, & be a true *Chriſtian* notwithſtanding; judge not therefore thy ſtate by any one *Character* thou findeſt laid down of a falſe Profeſſor, but read the whole, & then make a judgement; for I have cared, as not to give *childrens* Mat. 15. 26. *bread to dogs*; ſo not to uſe the dog-whip to ſcare the *children*: yet I could wiſh that this *Book* might fall into the hands of ſuch only whom it chiefly Rev. 3. 1. concerns, who *have a name to live, and* 2 Tim. 3. 5 *yet are dead*, being buſie with the *form of godlineſs*, but ſtrangers to the *power of it*. Theſe are the proper ſubjects of this Treatiſe. And the Lord follow it with his bleſſing wherever it comes,

that

that it may be an awakening word to all ſuch, & eſpecially to that generation of profligate profeſſors (with which this age abounds) who, if they keep to their Church, bow the knee, tale out a few prayers, and at a good time receive the *Sacrament*, think they do enough for Heaven, & hereupon judge their condition ſafe, and their ſalvation ſure, though there be a hell of ſin in their hearts, *and the Poyſon of Aſps under their lips*, their minds being as yet carnal and unconverted, and their converſations filthy and unſanctified: If eternal life be of ſo eaſie attainment, and to be had at ſo cheap a rate of devotion, it is to me a wonder what our Lord Chriſt meant to tell us, *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth into life, and few there be that find it.* And why the Apoſtle ſhould perplex us with ſuch a needleſſe injunction, *To give diligence to make their calling and election ſure*; certainly therefore it is no ſuch eaſie thing to be ſaved, as many make it, and that thou wilt ſee plainly

Ro. 3. 13.

Mat. 7. 14.

2 Pet. 1. 19.

plainly in the following Diſcourſe: I have been ſomewhat ſhort in the application of it, and therefore let me here be thy remembrancer in five important duties.

Firſt, *Take heed of reſting in a form of Godlineſs*, as if Duties *ex opere operato* could confer grace; a lifeleſs formality is advanced to a very high eſteem in the World, as a *Kab of Doves Dung*, was ſold in the Famine of *Samaria*, at a very dear rate. Alas the profeſſion of Godlineſs is but a ſandy Foundation, to build the hope of an immortal Soul upon for Eternity; remember the Lord Jeſus Chriſt called him a fooliſh Builder, *that founded his houſe upon the ſand*, and the ſad event proved him ſo, *for it fell, and great was the fall of it*; Oh therefore lay thy Foundations by Faith upon the Rock Chriſt Jeſus, look to Chriſt through all, and reſt upon Chriſt in all.

2 King 6. 25.

Mat. 7. 26. Verſe 27.

1 Cor. 3. 11.

Secondly, *Labour to ſee an excellency in the Power of Godlineſs*, a Beauty in the life of Grace; If the means of Grace have a lovelineſs in them,

them, ſurely Grace it ſelf hath much more; for *finis dat amabilitatem mediis*; the goodneſs of the means lies in its ſutableneſs and ſerviceableneſs to the end; the Form of Godlineſs hath no goodneſs in it, any farther then it ſteads and becomes uſeful to the Soul in the power and practice of Godlineſs. The life of Holineſs is the only excellent life, it is the life of Saints and Angels in heaven, yea, it is the life of God himſelf. As it is a great proof of the baſeneſs and filthineſs of ſin, that ſinners ſeek to cover it; ſo it is a great proof of the excellency of Godlineſs, that ſo many pretend to it: The very Hypocrites fair Profeſſion pleads the Cauſe of Religion, although the Hypocrite is then really Worſt, when he is ſeemingly Beſt. *Malus ubi bonum ſe ſimulat; tunc eſt peſſimus.*

Thirdly, *Look upon things to come as the greateſt Realities*; for *non entis & non apparentis idem eſt affectus*; things that are not believed, work no more upon the Affections, than if they had no Being; and this is the grand Reaſon why the generality of men

men ſuffer their affection to lacquey after the world, ſetting the Creature in the place of God in their hearts.

Moſt men judge of the Reality of things, by their viſibility and proximity to Senſe, and therefore the choice of that wretched Cardinal becomes their Option, who would not leave his part in *Paris*, for his part in *Paradiſe*; ſure whatever his intereſt might be in the former, he had little enough in the latter: Well may covetouſneſs be called Idolatry, when it thus chuſes the world for its God. Col. 3. 5.

Mar. 9. 44. O conſider Eternity is no Dream; Hell and the Worm that never dies, is no melancholy conceit; Heaven is no feigned *Elyſium*: There is the greateſt reality imaginable in theſe things; though they are ſpiritual, and out of the ken of ſenſe, yet they are real, and within the view of faith: *Look not therefore at the things which are ſeen, but look at the things which are not ſeen; for the things that are ſeen are temporal, but the things which are not ſeen are Eternal.* 2 Cor. 4. 18.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, *Set a high rate upon thy Soul*; what we lightly prize, we eaſily part with; many men ſell their ſouls (at the rate of prophane *Eſaus* birth-right) *for a morſel of meat*, nay, *for that which* (in the ſenſe of the Holy Ghoſt) is not *bread*; O conſider, thy ſoul is the moſt precious and invaluable Jewel in the world, it is σοφῆ τίκτων & καλὸν ποίκιλμα, the moſt beautiful piece of Gods workmanſhip in the whole Creation; it is that which bears the Image of God, and which was bought with the blood of the Son of God, and ſhall we not ſet a value upon it, and count it precious?

Heb. 12. 16. Iſa. 55. 2. 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.

The Apoſtle *Peter* ſpeaks of three very precious things.

A precious Chriſt. 1 Pet. 2. 7.
Precious Promiſes. 2 Pet 1. 4.
And precious Faith. and 1. 1.

Now the *preciouſneſs* of all theſe lies in their uſefulneſs to the ſoul. Chriſt is *precious*, as being the Redeemer of precious ſouls; the promiſes

are

are *precious*, as making over this *precious Christ*, *to precious souls*. *Faith* is *precious*, as bringing a *precious soul* to close with a *precious Christ*, as he is held forth in the *precious Promises*. Oh take heed that thou art not found *overvaluing* other things, & *undervaluing* thy soul. Shall thy flesh, nay thy beast be loved, and shall thy soul be slighted? wilt thou cloath and pamper thy body, and yet take no care of thy soul? this is as if a man should feed his Dog, and starve his Child; *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them*. Oh let not a tottering perishing carkass have all our time and care, as if the life and salvation of thy soul were not worth the while.

1 Cor. 6. 13.

Lastly, *Meditate much of the strictness and suddenness of that Judgment-day, which thou & I must pass through into an everlasting state*, wherein God the impartial Judge will require an account at our hands, of all our Talents and betrustments; we must then account for time, how we have spent that;

that; for Eſtate, how we have imployed that; for ſtrength, how we have laid out that; for affections and mercies, how they have been improved; for the relations we ſtood in here, how they have been diſcharged; and for ſeaſons and means of Grace, how they have been husbanded; and look how *we have ſowed here, ſo ſhall we reap hereafter.* Gal. 6. 7.

Reader, Theſe are things that of all other deſerve moſt of, and call loudeſt for, our utmoſt care and endeavour, though by the moſt leaſt minded: To conſider what a ſpirit of Atheiſm (if we may judge the tree by the fruits, and the principle by the practice) the hearts of moſt men are filled with, who live, as if God were not to be ſerved, nor Chriſt to be ſought, nor luſt to be mortified, nor ſelf to be denied, nor the Scripture to be believed, nor the Judgment-day to be minded, nor Hell to be feared, nor Heaven to be deſired, nor the Soul to be valued, but give up themſelves to a worſe than brutiſh ſenſuality, *to work all unclean-* Mat. 7. 19. 20.

Eph. 4. 19. and 2. 12. *uncleanneſs with greedineſs*, living without God in the world; This is a meditation fit enough to break our Hearts, if at leaſt we are of holy *Da-*

Pſal. 119. 158. *vids* temper, who *beheld the tranſ-greſſors and was grieved*, and had *Ri-*

Verſ. 136. *vers of waters running down his Eyes, becauſe men kept not Gods Laws.* The prevention and correction of this Soul-deſtroying Diſtemper, is not the leaſt Deſign of this Treatiſe now put into thy hand; though the chief vertue of this Receit lies in its ſoveraign uſe to aſſwage and cure the ſwelling Tympany of Hypocriſie; yet it may ſerve alſo (with Gods bleſſing) as a Plaiſter for the Plague-ſore of Profaneſs, if timely applied by ſerious Meditation, and carefully kept on by conſtant Prayer.

Reader, Expect nothing of Curioſity or Quaintneſs, for then I ſhall deceive thee; but if thou wouldſt have a Touch-ſtone for the Tryal of thy ſtate, poſſibly this may ſtead thee: If thou art either a ſtranger to a Profeſſion, or an Hypocrite under a Profeſſion, then read and tremble, for

for thou art the man here pointed at.

——— *Mutato nomine de te* *Horat.*
Fabula narratur ———

But if the Kingdom of God be come with power into thy ſoul; if Chriſt be formed in thee; if thy heart be upright and ſincere with God, then read and rejoyce. Mark.9.1. Luk.17.21

I fear I have tranſgreſſed the bounds of an Epiſtle; The Mighty God, whoſe Prerogative it is to teach to profit, whether by the Tongue, or the Pen, by Speaking or Writing, bleſs this Tract, that it may be to thee, as a cloud of Rain to the dry ground, dropping fatneſs to thy ſoul, that ſo thy Fleece being watered with the dew of Heaven, thou mayſt *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; In whom I am, Isa.48.17. 2 Pet.3.18.

Thy Friend and Servant,

London, Oct.29.
1661.

Mat. Meade.

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ACTS.

ACTS 26. 28.

——— Ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι.

——— *Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

IN this Chapter you have the Apoſtle *Pauls* Apology and defenſative plea which he makes for himſelf againſt thoſe blind *Jews*, which did ſo maliciouſly proſecute him before *Agrippa*, *Feſtus*, *Bernice*, and the Council.

In which plea he doth chiefly inſiſt upon three things.

The manner of his life before converſion.

The manner of his converſion.

The manner of his life after converſion.

How he lived before conversion, he tells you from *v.* 4. to 13.

How God wrought on him to conversion, he tells you from *v.* 13. to 18.

How he lived after conversion, he tells you from *v.* 19. to 23.

Before conversion he was very Pharisaical.

The manner of his conversion was very wonderful.

The fruit of his conversion was very remarkable.

Before conversion he persecuted the Gospel which others preached: after conversion he preached the *Gospel* which himself had persecuted.

While he was a Persecutor of the Gospel, the *Jews* loved him; but now that (by the grace of God) he was become a Preacher of the Gospel, now the *Jews* hate him, and sough to kill him.

Verse 21.

He was once against Christ, and then many were for him, but now that he was for Christ, all were against him; his being an enemy to Jesus, made others his friends; but when he came to own Jesus, then they became his enemies.

Verse 9.

And

And this was the great charge they had againſt him, that of a great oppoſer, he was become a great Profeſſor.

Becauſe God had changed him, therefore this enraged them. As if they would be the worſe, becauſe God had made him better. God had wrought on him by grace, and they ſeem to envie him the grace of God. *Hic vir invidet mihi gratiam Chriſti.*

He preached no Treaſon, nor ſowed no Sedition; only he preached repentance, and faith in Chriſt, and the Reſurrection, and for this he was called into queſtion.

This is the breviate and ſum of *Pauls* defence and plea for himſelf, which you find in the ſequel of the Chapter, had a different effect upon his Judges.

Feſtus ſeems to cenſure him, *verſe* 24.

Agrippa ſeems to be convinced by him, *ver.* 28.

The whole Bench ſeem to acquit him, *ver.* 30, 31.

Feſtus he thinks *Paul* was beſide himſelf.

Agrippa he is almoſt perſwaded to be ſuch an one as himſelf.

Fe-

Dei sapientia, mundi est insania. Malc. in loc.

Festus thinks him mad because he did not understand the doctrine of Christ and the Resurrection; *Much learning hath made thee mad.*

Putat hominem esse fanaticum Marlor. in loc.

Agrippa he is so affected with his plea, that he is almost wrought into his principle: *Paul* pleads so effectually for his Religion, that *Agrippa* seems to be upon the turning point to his profession.

Then Agrippa *said to* Paul, *Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian.*

Almost] ἐν ὀλίγῳ, so the Greek; the words make some debate among the learned. I shall not trouble you with the various hints upon them by *Valla*, *Simplicius*, *Beza*, *Erasmus*, and others.

I take the words as we read them, and they shew what an efficacy *Pauls* Doctrine had upon *Agrippa's* conscience. Though he would not be converted, yet he could not but be convinced. His conscience was touched, though his heart was not renewed.

Observ. *There is that in Religion, which carries its own evidence along with it, even to the Consciences of ungodly men.*

Thou

Thou perswadest me] πείθεις, the word is from the Hebrew פתה and it signifies both *suadere* and *persuadere*, either to use arguments to prevail, or to prevail by the arguments used. Now it is to be taken in the latter sense here, to shew the influence of *Paul's* Argument upon *Agrippa*, which had almost proselyted him to the profession of Christianity.

Suadere est conantis, persuadere est efficientis Beza. *Suadet qui consulit; persuadet, qui quo vult, inducit hominem.* Eral.

Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian.

A Christian] χριστιανὸν γενέσθαι.

I hope I need not tell you what a Christian is, though I am perswaded many that are call'd *Christians*, do not know what a Christian is; or if they do, yet they don't know what it is to be a Christian.

A Christian is a Disciple of Jesus Christ; one that believes in, and follows Christ. As he that embraces the Doctrine of *Arminius*, is called an *Arminian*; and as he that owns the Doctrine and way of *Luther*, is called a *Lutheran*; so he that embraces and owns and follows the Doctrine of Jesus Christ, he is called a Christian.

The word is taken more largely, and

and more strictly: more largely, and so all that profess Christ come in the flesh, are called Christians, in opposition to *Heathens* that do not know Christ; and to the poor blind *Jews*, that will not own Christ; and to the *Mahometan*, that prefers *Mahomet* above Christ.

But now in Scripture, the word is of a more strict and narrow acceptation; it is used only to denominate the true Disciples and followers of Christ, *Acts* 11.26. *The Disciples were first called Christians at* Antioch, 1 *Pet.* 4.16. *If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed*; that is, a member, a Disciple of Christ, and so in the Text, *Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian.*

The word is used but in these three places (as I find) in all the New Testament, and in each of them it signifies in the sense afore-mentioned.

Fulk. Not. in Rhem. Test. The *Italians* make the name to be a name of reproach among them, and do usually abuse the word Christian to signifie a fool.

1 Cor. 1. 18. But if, as the Apostle saith, *the Preaching of Christ*, is to the World *foolish-*

fooliſhneſs, then it is no wonder that the Diſciples of Chriſt are to the World, *fools*.

Yet it is true (in a ſound ſenſe) ſo they are. For the whole of godlineſs is a Myſtery. 1 Tim. 3. 16.

A man muſt *die*, that would *live*; he muſt be *empty*, that would be *full*; he muſt be *loſt*, that would be *found*; he muſt *have nothing*, that *would have all things*; he muſt *be blind*, that would have *illumination*; he muſt be *condemned*, that would have *redemption*; ſo he muſt be a *fool*, that would be a *Chriſtian*. *If any man among you ſeems to be wiſe, let him become a fool, that he may be wiſe.* 1 Cor. 4. 11.

He is the true Chriſtian, that is the worlds fool, but wiſe to ſalvation.

Thus you have the ſenſe and meaning of the words briefly explained.

The Text needs no diviſion, and yet it is pity, the *almoſt* ſhould not be divided from the *Chriſtian*.

Though it is of little avail to divide them as they are linked in the *Text*, unleſs I could divide *them*, as they are united in your hearts, this would be

a blessed division, if the *almost* might be taken from the *Christian*. That so you may not be only ἐν ὀλίγῳ, but ἐν πολλῷ, not only *propemodum*, but *admodum*, not only almost, but altogether Christians.

This is Gods work to effect it; but it is our *duty* to perswade to it, & O that God would help me to manage this Subject so, that you may say in the conclusion, thou perswadest me (not almost, but) altogether to be a Christian.

The Observation that I shall propound to handle, is this.

Doct. *There are very many in the world, that are almost, and yet but almost Christians; many that are near heaven, and yet are ne're the near; many that are within a little of Salvation, and yet shall never enjoy the least Salvation; they are within sight of Heaven, and yet shall never have a sight of God.*

There are two sad expressions in Scripture, which I cannot but take notice of in this place.

The one is concerning the truly righteous.

The

The other is concerning the ſeemingly righteous.

It is ſaid of the truly righteous, he ſhall *ſcarcely be ſaved*; and it is ſaid of the ſeemingly righteous, he ſhall be *almoſt ſaved. Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, Mark. 12. 24. μόλις σώζεται. 1 Pet. 4. 18.

The righteous ſhall be ſaved with a *ſcarcely*; that is, through much difficulty: he ſhall go to heaven through many ſad fears of Hell.

The Hypocrite ſhall be ſaved with an *almoſt*; that is, he ſhall go to Hell through many fair hopes of Heaven. *Quod vix fit fit; quod fere fit non fit.*

There are two things ariſe from hence, of very ſerious Meditation.

The one is, how oft a believer may miſcarry, how low he may fall, and yet have true grace.

The other is, how far a Hypocrite may go in the way to Heaven, how high he may attain, and yet have no grace.

The Saint may be caſt down very near to Hell, and yet ſhall never come there; and the Hypocrite may be lifted up very near to Heaven, and yet never come there.

The

The Saint may *almoſt* periſh, and yet be ſaved eternally; the Hypocrite may *almoſt* be ſaved, and yet periſh finally.

For the Saint at worſt is really a believer; and the Hypocrite at beſt is really a ſinner.

Before I handle the *Doctrine*, I muſt premiſe three things which are of great uſe for the eſtabliſhing of weak believers, that they may not be *ſhaken* and diſcouraged by this Doctrine.

Firſt, There is nothing in the Doctrine that ſhould be matter of ſtumbling or diſcouragement to weak Chriſtians.

The Goſpel doth not ſpeak theſe things to wound believers, but to awaken ſinners and formal profeſſors.

As there are none more averſe than weak believers to apply the *promiſes*, and comforts of the Goſpel to themſelves, for whom they are properly deſigned:

So there are none more ready than they to apply the threats and ſevereſt things of the Word to themſelves for whom they were never intended.

As

As the Diſciples, when Chriſt told them, *One of you ſhall betray me*, they that were innocent, ſuſpected themſelves moſt, and therefore cry out, *Maſter is it I?* Mat. 26. 15

So weak Chriſtians, when they hear ſinners reproved, or the Hypocrite laid open, in the *Miniſtery* of the word, they preſently cry out, *Is it I?*

It is the Hypocrites fault to ſit under the tryals and diſcoveries of the Word, and yet not to mind them.

And it is the weak Chriſtians fault to draw ſad concluſions of their own ſtate from premiſes which nothing concern them.

There is indeed great uſe of ſuch Doctrine as this is, to all believers.

1. To make them look to their ſtanding, upon what bottom they are, and to ſee that the foundation of *their hope* be well laid, that they build not upon the *Sand*, but upon a *Rock*. Mat. 7. 24, 26.

2. It helps to raiſe our admiration of the diſtinguiſhing love of God in bringing us into the *way everlaſting*, when ſo many periſh from the way: and in overpowring our ſouls into a true converſion, when ſo many Pſa. 139. 24.

take

take up with a graceless profession.

1 Cor. 13. 5. 3. It incites to that excellent duty of *heart-searching*, that so we may approve our selves to God in sincerity

4. It engages the soul in double diligence, that it may be found not only believing, but persevering in faith to the end.

These duties (and such as these are) make this Doctrine of use to all beleivers; but they ought not to make use of it as a stumbling-block in the way of their peace and comfort.

My design in Preaching on this subject, is not to make sad the souls of those whom Christ will not have made sad; I would bring water not to

Mat. 12. 20. *quench the flax that is smoaking*, but to put out that false fire that is of the sinners *own kindling*, lest walking all his days by the light thereof, he

Isa. 50 1. should at last *lie down in sorrow*.

My aim is to level the Mountain of the sinners confidence, not to weaken the hand of the beleivers faith and dependance; to awaken and bring in secure formal sinners, not to discourage weak beleivers.

Secondly, I would premise this, though

though many may go far (very far) in the way to Heaven, and yet fall ſhort; yet that ſoul that hath the leaſt true grace ſhall never fall ſhort. *The righteous ſhall hold on his way.* Job 17.9.

Though ſome may do very much in a way of duty (as I ſhall ſhew hereafter) and yet miſcarry; yet that ſoul that doth duty with the leaſt ſincerity ſhall never miſcarry. *For he ſaveth the upright in heart.* Pſa. 7. 10.

The leaſt meaſure of true grace is as ſaving as the greateſt; it ſaves as ſurely, though not ſo comfortably.

The leaſt grace gives a full intereſt in the blood of Chriſt, whereby we are throughly purged; and it gives a full intereſt in the ſtrength and power of Chriſt, whereby we ſhall be certainly preſerved.

Chriſt keep faith in the ſoul, and faith keeps the ſoul in Chriſt, and ſo *we are kept by the power of God through faith to ſalvation.* 1 Pet. 1. 5.

Thirdly, I would premiſe this; they that can hear ſuch truths as this, without ſerious reflection, and ſelf-examination, I much ſuſpect the goodneſs of their condition.

You'l

Youl ſuſpect that man to be next door to a Bankrupt, that never caſts up his ſhop, nor looks over his books; and I as verily think that man a hypocrite, that never ſearches nor deals with his own heart.

He that goeson in a road of duties without any rub or doubting of his ſtate, I doubt no mans ſtate more than his.

When we ſee a man ſick, and yet not ſenſible, we conclude the tokens of death are upon him.

So when ſinners have no ſenſe of their ſpiritual condition, it is plain that they are dead in ſin, the tokens of eternal death are upon them.

Theſe things being premiſed (which I deſire you would carry along in your mind while we travel through this ſubject) I come to ſpeak to the Propoſition more diſtinctly and cloſely.

Doct. *That there are very many in the world that are almoſt, and yet but almoſt Chriſtians.*

I ſhall demonſtrate the truth of the Propoſition, and then proceed to a more diſtinct proſecution.

1. I

1. I ſhall demonſtrate the truth of the Propoſition, and I ſhall do it by Scripture evidence, which ſpeaks plain and fully to the caſe.

1. The young man in the Goſpel is an eminent proof of this truth, in *Mat.* 19. 16, to 23. There you read of one that came to Chriſt, to learn of him the way to Heaven. *Good Maſter, what good thing ſhall I do, that I may have eternal life?* Verſe 16.

Our Lord Chriſt tells him, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments*; and when Chriſt tells him which; he Anſwers, *Lord, all theſe have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?* Verſe 17. Verſe 20.

Now do but ſee how far this man went.

2. *He obeyed*] he did not only hear the commands of God, but he kept them; now the Scripture ſaith, *bleſſed is he that hears the Word of God, and keeps it.* Luk. 11. 8.

2. *He obeyed univerſally*] not this or that command, but both this and that; he did not halve it with *God*, or pick and chuſe which were eaſieſt to be done, and leave the reſt; no, but he obeys

obeys all, *all these things have I kept.*

Hos. 6. 4. 3. *He obeyed constantly*] not in a fit of zeal only, but in a continued series of duty; his goodness was not (as *Ephraims*) *like the morning dew, that passes away*; no, *all these things have I kept from my youth up.*

4. *He professeth his desire to know and do more*] *to perfect that which was lacking of his obedience*, and therefore he goes to Christ to instruct him in his duty; Master, *what lack I yet?* Now would you not think this a good man? alas how few go thus far?

And yet as far as he went, he went not far enough; *he was almost, and yet but almost a Christian*; for he was an unsound Hypocrite, he forsakes

Verse 21. Christ at last, and cleaves to his lust.

This then is a full proof of the truth of the Doctrine.

A second proof of it, is that of the Parable of the Virgins, *Mat.* 25. 1. and so on.

See what a progress they make, how far they go in a profession of Christ.

Psa. 45. 11. 1. *They are called Virgins*] Now this is a name given in the Scripture, both

both in the Old Testament, & New, to the Saints of Christ, *Cant.* 1. 3. *The Virgins love thee*, so *Rev.* 14. 4. the One hundred & forty four thousand, that stood with the lamb on Mount *Sion*, are called *Virgins*. They are called *Virgins*, because they are not defiled with *the corruptions that are in the world through lust.* 2 Cor. 11. 2, 3. 2 Per. 1 4. Mat. 25. 1.

Now these here seem to be of that sort, for they are called *Virgins.* Vers. 3.

2. *They take their Lamps,*] that is, they made a profession of Christ.

3. *They had some kind of Oyl in their lamps*] as appears *v.* 8. they had some convictions, and some faith (though not the faith of Gods elect) to keep their profession alive, to keep the Lamp burning.

Hi sunt non quales cunque animæ sed tales quæ habent catholicam fidem, & habere videntur bona opera in ecclesia Dei. Aug. De Ser. Dom. Ser. 13.

4 *They went*] their profession was not an idle profession, they did perform duties, frequent ordinances, and do many things commanded, they made a progress, *they went.*

5. *They went forth.*] they went, and outwent, they left many behind them, this speaks out their separation from the world. Vers. 1.

6. *They went with the wise Virgins.*]

they joyned themſelves to thoſe who had joyned themſelves to the Lord, and were the companions of them that were the companions of Chriſt.

Cant. 1. 7. 7. *They go forth to meet the Bridegroom*] this ſpeaks out their owning and ſeeking after Chriſt.

8. When they heard the cry of the Bridegroom coming, *they aroſe, and trimmed their lamps*, they profeſs Chriſt more highly, hoping now to go in with the Bridegroom.

Verſ. 7.

9. *They ſought for true grace*] now, don't we ſay, the deſires of grace, are grace? and ſo they are, if true and timely, if ſound and ſeaſonable.

Why? loe here a deſire of grace in theſe Virgins, *giveus of your Oyl.*

It was a deſire of true grace, but it was not a true deſire of grace, it was not true, becauſe not timely, unſound, as being unſeaſonable; it was too late.

Verſ. 8.

Their folly was in not taking Oyl when they took their Lamps, their time of ſeeking grace was when they came to Chriſt, it was too late to ſeek it when Chriſt came to them. They ſhould

ſhould have ſought for that, when they took up their profeſſion; it was too late to ſeek it at the coming of the Bridegroom.

And therefore *they were ſhut out*; and though they cry for entrance, *Lord, Lord, open to us*, yet the Lord Chriſt tells them, *I know you not*. Verſ. 10. Verſ. 11. Verſ. 12.

You ſee how far theſe Virgins go in a profeſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, and how long they continue in it, even till the Bridegroom came; they go to the very doors of Heaven, and there (like the *Sodomites*) periſh with their hands upon the very threſholds of glory.

They were *almoſt Chriſtians*, and yet but *almoſt*: Almoſt ſaved, and yet periſh.

You that are profeſſors of the Goſpel of Chriſt, ſtand and tremble; if they that have gone beyond us fall ſhort of Heaven, what ſhall become of us that fall ſhort of them?

If they that are Virgins, that profeſs Chriſt, that have ſome faith in their profeſſion (ſuch as it is) that have ſome fruit in their faith, that out-ſtrip others, that ſeek Chriſt,

that improve their profession, and suit themselves to their profession, nay, that seek grace; if such as these be but *almost Christians*, Lord, what then are we?

If these two witnesses be not sufficient to prove the truth, and confirm the credit of the Proposition.

Take a third, and that shall be from the Old Testament, *Isa.* 58. 2. See what God saith of that people; he gives them a very high character for a choice people one would think.

They seek me daily, they delight to know my way, as a Nation that did Righteousness, and forsook not the Ordinance of their God: they ask of me the Ordinances of Justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

See how far these went; if God had not said they were rotten and unsound, we should have took them for the *Hee Goats before the Flock*, and ranked them among the worthies; pray observe.

Jer. 50. 8.

1. *They seek God;*] Now this is the proper Character of a true Saint, to seek God. True Saints are called seekers of God. *This is the generation of*

Psa. 24. 6.

them

them that ſeek him, that ſeek thy face O Jacob, or O God of *Jacob.*

Lo here a generation of them that ſeek God, and are not theſe the Saints of God? Nay farther;

2. *They ſeek him dayly;*] here's diligence backed wth continuance יום יום *day by day*, that is, every day, from day to day. They did not ſeek him by fits and girds, nor in a time of trouble & affliction only, as many do. *Lord, in trouble have they viſited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chaſtening was upon them,* Iſa. 26. 16. Many when God viſits them, then they viſit him, but not till then; when God poureth out his afflictions, then they pour out their ſupplications. This is Seamens devotion, when the ſtorms have brought them *to their wits end,* Jon. 7. 5. *then they cry to the Lord in their trouble,* Pſa. 107. 27, 28. many never cry to *God* till they are at their wits end, they never come to God for help, ſo long as they can help themſelves.

But now theſe here, whom God ſpeaks of, are more zealous in their *devotion*; the others make a vertue of neceſſity, but theſe ſeem to make con-

science of duty; for saith God, *They seek me daily.*

Sure this is (one would think) a Note of sincerity.

Job 27.10 *Job* saith of the Hypocrite, *Will he always call upon God?* surely no; but now this people call upon God in wayes, *They seek him daily*, certainly these are no Hypocrites.

3. Saith God, *They delight to know my ways.*] Sure this frees them from the suspition of hypocrisie, for *Job* 21.14. *They say unto God, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy wayes.*

4. *They are as a Nation that did righteousnes.*] Not only as a Nation that spake Righteousnes, or knew Righteousnes, or professed Righteousnes, but as a Nation that did righteousnes, that practised nothing but what was just and right. They appeared to the judgment of the world as good as the best.

5. *They forsook not the Ordinances of their God*] they seem true to their Principles, constant to their profession, better then many among us, that cast off duties, and forsake the Ordinances

nances of God, but these hold out in their profession, *They forsook not the Ordinances of God.*

6. *They ask of me* (saith God) *the Ordinances of Justice*] they will not make their own wills the rule of right and wrong, but the Law and will of God, and therefore in all their dealings with men, they desire to be guided and counselled by God. *They ask of me the Ordinances of Justice.*

7. *They take delight in approaching to God.*] Sure this can't be the guise of an Hypocrite, *will he delight himself in the Almighty?* saith *Job*: no, he will not. Job 27.10

Though God is the chief delight of man, (having every thing in him to render him lovely, as was said of *Titus Vespatian*) yet the Hypocrite will not delight in God. *Delicia humani generis.*

Till the affections are made spiritual, there is no affection to things that are spiritual, God is a spiritual good, and therefore Hypocrites cannot delight in God. But these are a people that delight in approaching to God. *Hypocrita neque Deum neque divina habet in deliciis.*

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6. *They ask of me* (ſaith God) *the Ordinances of Juſtice*] they will not make their own wills the rule of right and wrong, but the Law and will of God, and therefore in all their dealings with men, they deſire to be guided and counſelled by God. *They ask of me the Ordinances of Juſtice.*

7. *They take delight in approaching to God.*] Sure this can't be the guiſe of an Hypocrite, *will he delight himſelf in the Almighty?* ſaith *Job*: no, he will not. Job 27.10

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Till the affections are made ſpiritual, there is no affection to things that are ſpiritual, God is a ſpiritual good, and therefore Hypocrites cannot delight in God. But theſe are a people that delight in approaching to God. *Hypocrita neque Deum neque divina habet in deliciis.*

8. They were a people that were much in fasting, as you may see, *v.* 3. *wherefore have we fasted* (say they) *and thou seest not?* Now this is a duty that doth not suppose and require truth of grace onely in the heart, but strength of grace.

Mat. 9. 17. *No man* (saith our Lord Christ) *puts new wine into old bottles, lest the bottles break, and the wine runs out.*

New wine is strong, and old bottles weak, and the strong wine breaks the weak vessel, this is a reason Christ gives, why his Disciples who were newly converted (and but weak as yet) were not exercised with this austere Discipline.

But this people here mentioned, were a people that fasted often, *afflicted their Souls* much, wore themselves out by frequent practices of humiliation.

Assembles Annot. upon the place.

Sure therefore this *was new wine, in new bottles*, this must needs be a people strong in grace; here seems to be grace not onely in truth, but also in growth.

And yet for all this, they were no better then a Generation of Hypocrites,

crites, they made a goodly progress, and went far, but yet they went not far enough; they were cast off by God after all. I hope by this time the truth of the point is sufficiently avouched and confirmed, that a man may be (yea very many are) *almost, and yet* (no more than) *but almost Christians.*

Now for the more distinct prosecution of the point.

1. *I shall shew you step by step, how far a man may go, what attainments he may reach unto, how specious and singular a progress he may make in Religion, and yet be but almost a Christian when all is done.*

2. *I will shew you whence it is, that many men go so far as that they are almost Christians.*

3. *Why they are but almost Christians when they have gone thus far.*

4. *What the reason is, why men that go thus far as to be almost Christians, yet go no farther then to be almost Christians.*

Quest. 1. *How far a man may go in the way to heaven, and yet be but almost a Christian?*

Answ. This I shall shew you in twenty several steps.

1. *A man may have much knowledge, much light, he may know much of God and his Will, much of Christ, and his ways*, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

For though there can be no grace without knowledge, yet there may be much knowledge where there is no grace; illumination often goes before, when conversion never follows after. The Subject of knowledge is the understanding, the Subject of holiness is the Will.

Now a man may have his understanding enlightned, and yet his will not at all sanctified.

He may have an understanding to know God, and yet want a will to obey God. The Apostle tells us of some, that *when they knew God, yet they glorified him not as God.*

Rom. 1. 21

To make a man altogether a Christian, there must be light in the head, and heat in the heart, knowledge in the understanding, and zeal in the affections.

Some have zeal and no knowledge

ledge, that is blind devotion, ſome have knowledge and no zeal, that is fruitleſs ſpeculation. But where knowledge is joyned with zeal, that makes a true Chriſtian.

But is it not ſaid, *This is life eternal, to know thee the onely true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent?* Joh. 17. 3. Object.

It is not every knowledge of God and Chriſt that intereſts the ſoul in life eternal. For why then do the devils periſh? they have more knowledge of God then all the men in the World; for though by their fall they loſt their holineſs, yet they loſt not their knowledge. Sol.

They are called Δαίμονες from their knowledge, and yet they are Διάβολοι for their malice, Devils ſtill.

Knowledge may fill the head, but it will never better the heart, if there be not ſomewhat elſe. The *Phariſees* had much knowledge. *Behold thou art called a Jew, and reſteſt in the Law, and makeſt thy boaſt of God, and knoweſt his will, &c.* and yet they were a Generation of Hypocrites. Rom. 2. 17, 18. *Sinite ſapientes hujus mundi ſapienter deſcendere ad infernum.*

Alas, how many have gone loaded with knowledge to Hell?

Though

Though it is true, that it is life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ, yet it is as true, that many do know God and Jesus Christ, that shall never see life eternal.

There is, you must know, a twofold knowledge, one is common but not saving, the other is not common but saving; common knowledge is that which floats in the head, but doth not influence nor affect the heart.

This knowledge Reprobates may have, *Balaam* saw Christ *from the top of the Rocks, and from the Hills.*

Numb. 23. 10.

Naturalists say, that there is a pearl in the Toads head, and yet her belly is full of poyson. The *French* have a Berry which they call *uve de spine*, the Grape of a Thorn.

The common knowledge of Christ is the Pearl in the Toads head, the Grape that grows upon Thorns, it may be found in men unsanctified.

And then there is a saving knowledge of God and Christ, which doth include the assent of the mind, and the consent of the will, this is a knowledge that implies faith, *By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justifie many.*

Isa. 53. 11.

And

And this is that knowledge, which leads to eternal life: Now whatever the measure of knowledge is, which a man may have of God, and of Jesus Christ, yet if it be not this saving knowledge, knowledge joyned with affection and application, he is but almost a Christian.

He only knows God aright, who knows how to obey him, and obeys according to his knowledge of him, *A good understanding have all they that do his Commandments.* Psal. 111. 10.

All knowledge without this, makes a man but like *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, with *a Head of gold, and feet of clay.*

Some know, but to know.
Some know, to be known.
Some know, to practice what they know.
Now to know, but to know, that's curiosity.
To know, to be known, that's vain glory.
But to know, to practise what we know, that is Gospel duty.

This makes a man a compleat Christian, the other without this makes a

a

man *almost*, and yet but *almost* a Christian.

2. *A man may have great and eminent gifts, yea spiritual gifts*, and yet be but almost a Christian. The gift of prayer is a spiritual gift; now this a man may have, and yet be but almost a Christian, for the gift of prayer is one thing, the grace of prayer is another.

1 Cor. 12. 10. The gift of preaching and prophesying is a spiritual gift; now this a man may have, and yet be but *almost a Christian*. *Judas* was a great Preacher, so were they that came to Christ, and said, *Lord Lord, we have* Mat. 7. 22. *prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out Devils, &c.*

You must know that it is not gifts, but grace, which makes a Christian. For,

1. Gifts are from a common work of the Spirit, now a man may partake of all the common gifts of the Spirit, and yet be a Reprobate; for therefore they are called common, because they are indifferently dispensed by the Spirit to good and bad; to them that are believers, and to them that are not. They

They that have grace, have gifts; & they that have no grace may have the same gifts, for the Spirit works in both; nay in this sense, he that hath no grace may be under a greater work of the Spirit (*quo-ad hoc*) as to this thing, than he that hath most grace; a graceless professor may have greater gifts, than the most holy believer. He may out-pray, and out-preach, and out-do them, but in sincerity and integrity out-go him.

2. Gifts are for the use and good of others, they are given *in ordine ad alium*, as the School-men speak, for the profiting and edifying of others, so says the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 12. 7. *They are given to profit withal.* Eph. 4. 12. *Dona dantur in adjutorium, gratia.*

Now a man may edifie another by his gifts, and yet be unedified himself; He may be profitable to another, and yet unprofitable to himself.

A lame man may with his Crutch point to thee the right way, and yet not be able to walk in it himself. A crooked Taylor may make a suit to fit

fit a straight body, though it fit not him that made it, because of his crookedness.

The Raven was an unclean Bird, yet God makes use of her to feed *Eliah*; though she was not good meat, yet it was good meat she brought. 1 Cor. 9. 25.

The Church (Christs garden inclosed) may be watered through a wooden gutter: the Sun may give light through a sluttish window; and the Field may be well sowed with a dirty hand.

The efficacy of the Word doth not depend upon the authority of him that speaks it, but upon the authority of the God that blesses it. So that another may be converted by my preaching, and yet I may be a *castaway* notwithstanding. *Balaam* makes a clear & rare prophesie of Christ, & yet hath he no benefit by Christ; *There shall come a Star out of* Jacob, *& a Scepter shall rise out of* Israel. But yet *Balaam* shall have no benefit by it, *I shall see him, but not now, I shall behold him, but not nigh*, Num. 24. 17.

God may use a mans gifts to bring another unto Christ, when he himself, whose gifts God uses, may be a Stranger unto Christ; One man may confirm another in the faith, and yet himself may be a stranger to the faith.

faith. *Pendleton* strengthens and confirms *Saunders*, in Queen *Maries* days, to stand in the truth he had preached, and to seal it with his blood, and yet afterwards playes the Apostate himself. Acts and Mon. last Edit. 3. ver. p. 141

Sculletus tells us of one *Joannes Speiserus*, a famous Preacher of *Ausborough* in *Germany*, in the year 1523. who preached the Gospel so powerfully, that divers common *Harlots* were converted, and became good Christians, & yet himself afterwards turned Papist, and came to a miserable end. *Sculletus Annal* p. 118.

Thus the candle may burn bright to light others in their Work, and yet afterwards go out in a stink.

3. It is beyond the power of the greatest gifts to change the heart; a man may preach like an Apostle, pray like an Angel, and yet may have the heart of a Devil. It is grace only that can change the heart, the greatest gifts can't change it, but the least grace can; gifts may make a man a Scholar, but grace makes a man a believer.

Now if gifts can't change the heart, then

then a man may have the greateſt gifts, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian.*

4. Many have gone loaden with gifts to hell; no doubt *Judas* had great gifts, for he was a Preacher of the Goſpel, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt would not ſet him in the work, and not fit him for the work, yet *Judas* is *gone to his own place*; the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* were men of great gifts, and yet *where is the wiſe? where is the Scribe?*

1 Cor. 1. 20.

1 Cor. 1. 18.

The preaching of the croſs is to them that periſh, fooliſhneſs.

Them that periſh, who are they? who? the wiſe and the learned, both among *Jews* and *Greeks*; theſe are called *them that periſh. Surgunt indocti & rapiunt cœlum, dum nos cum doctrina noſtra in Gehennam detrudimur*, ſaid a great Biſhop, when he ſaw a poor Shepherd weeping over a Toad. The poor illiterate World attain to heaven, while we with all our learning fall into hell.

There are three things muſt be done for us, if ever we would avoid periſhing.

We

We muſt be throughly convinced of ſin.

We muſt be really united unto Chriſt.

We muſt be inſtated in the Covenant of grace.

Now the greateſt gifts cannot ſtead us in any one of theſe.

They cannot work through convictions.

They cannot affect our union.

They cannot bring us into Covenant-relation.

And conſequently they cannot preſerve from eternal periſhing, and if ſo, then a man may have the greateſt gifts, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

5. Gifts may decay and periſh, they do not lye beyond the reach of corruption; indeed grace ſhall never periſh, but gifts will; grace is incorruptible, though gifts are not; grace is *a ſpring whoſe waters fail not*, but the ſtream of gifts may be dryed up. If grace be corruptible in its own nature, as being but a Creature, yet it is incorruptible in regard of its conſerver, as being the new creature; he that did

Ioh. 4. 14.

Iſa. 58. 11.

did create it in us, will conserve it for us; he that did begin it, will also finish it.

Heb. 12. 2. Gifts have their root in nature, but grace hath its root in Christ, and therefore though gifts may dye and wither, yet grace shall abide for ever.

Now if gifts are perishing, then (though he that hath the least grace is a Christian, yet) he that hath the greatest gifts, may be but almost a Christian.

Object. But doth not the Apostle bid us *covet earnestly the best gifts?* 1 Cor. 12. 31. why must we covet them, and covet them earnestly, if they avail not to salvation?

Answ. Gifts are good, though they are not the best good; they are excellent, but there is somewhat more excellent, so it follows in the same verse, *yet I shew unto you a more excellent way*, and that is the way of grace; one dram of grace is more worth than a talent of gifts; gifts may make us rich towards men, but it is grace that makes us *rich towards God.*

Luke 12. 21. Our gifts profit others, but grace profits

profits our *ſelves*; that wherby I profit another is good, but that whereby I am profited my ſelf is better.

Now becauſe gifts are good, therefore we ought to covet them, but becauſe they are not the beſt good, therefore we ought not to reſt in them; we muſt covet gifts for the good of others, that they may be edified, and we muſt covet grace for the good of our own ſouls, that they may be ſaved; for whoever be bettered by our gifts, yet we ſhall miſcarry without grace.

3. *A man may have a high profeſſion of Religion, be much in external duties of godlineſs, & yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* Mark what our Lord Chriſt tels them in *Mat.*7. 21. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; that is, not every one that makes a profeſſion of Chriſt, ſhall therefore be owned for a true Diſciple of Chriſt.

All are not Iſrael that are of Iſrael, nor are all Chriſtians that make a profeſſion of Religion. Rom. 9. 6.

What a goodly *profeſſion* had *Judas*, he followed *Chriſt*, left all for *Chriſt*, he

he preached the Gospel of Christ, he cast out devils in the name of Christ, he eat and drank at the Table of Christ, and yet *Judas* was but a hypocrite.

Most professors are like Lillies, fair in shew, but foul in scent; or like Pepper, hot in the mouth, but cold in the stomack. The finest lace may be upon the coarsest cloth.

It is a great deceit to measure the substance of our Religion, by the bulk of our profession; and to judge of the strength of our graces, by the length of our duties. The Scriptures speak of some, who having *a form of godliness, yet deny the power thereof.* 2 Tim. 3. 5 Deny the power, that is, they don't live in the practise of those graces which they pretend to in their duties; he that pretends to godliness by a specious profession, and yet doth not practise godliness, by a holy conversation, he *hath a form, but denies the power.*

Loquitur hic ut piso, vivet ut Gallonius. *Hugo* compares such to the Ostrich, *qui alas habet, sed non volat,* which hath great wings, but yet flies not; many have the wings of a fair profession,

feſſion, but yet uſe them nor to mount upward in ſpiritual affections, and a heavenly converſation.

But to clear the truth of this, that a man may make a high profeſſion of Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian, take a fourfold evidence.

1. If a man may profeſs Religion, & yet never have his heart changed, nor his ſtate bettered, then he may be a great profeſſor, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

But a man may profeſs Religion, and yet never have his heart changed nor his ſtate renewed.

He may be a conſtant hearer of the Word, & yet be a ſinner ſtill; he may come often to the Lords Table, and yet go away a ſinner as he came; we muſt not think that duties, *ex opere operato*, can confer grace.

Many a ſoul hath been converted by Chriſt in an Ordinance, but never was any ſoul converted by an Ordinance without Chriſt.

And doth Chriſt convert all that ſit under the Ordinances? ſurely no, for to ſome *the Word is a ſavour of death unto death.* 1 Cor. 2. 16.

And

And if ſo, then it is plain, that a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

2. A man may profeſs Religion, and live in a form of godlineſs in Hypocriſie, *Iſaiah* 48. 1. *Hear ye this, O Houſe of Jacob, which are called by the name of Iſrael, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which ſwear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Iſrael, but not in truth, nor in righteouſneſs.* What do ye think of theſe? *they make mention of the name of the Lord,* there is their profeſſion: *but not in truth, nor in righteouſneſs,* there is their diſſimulation; and indeed there could be no hypocriſie in a Religious ſenſe were it not for a profeſſion of Religion; for he that is wicked, and carnal, and vile inwardly, and appears to be ſo outwardly, he is no hypocrite, but is what he appears, and appears what he is.

But he that is one thing really, and another thing ſeemingly, is carnal & unholy, and yet ſeems to be good and holy, he is an Hypocrite.

Hypocrita cupit videri juſtus.

Thus the *Caſuiſts* define hypocriſie to

to be *simulatio sanctitatis*, a counterfeiting of holiness, and this fits exactly with the Greek word ὑποκριτὴς, which is from ὑποκρίνομαι, to counterfeit. *Tollet instit. Sacerd, l. 8. c. 9.*

And to this purpose, the Hebrews have two words for hypocrits, *panim* which signifies *facies*, and *Chanephim*, which signifies *counterfeits*, from *chanaph* to dissemble, so that he is an hypocrite that dissembles religion, and weareth the face of holiness, and yet is without the grace of holiness; he appears to be in semblance, what he is not in substance; he wears a form of godliness without, onely as a cover of a prophane heart within. פנים from the root חנף חנפים

He hath a *profession* that he may not be thought wicked, but it is but a *profession*, and therefore he is wicked.

He is the religious hypocrite, *religious* because he pretends to it, and yet an hypocrite, because he doth but pretend to it; he is like many men in a consumption, that have fresh looks, and yet rotten Lungs: or like an apple that hath a skin fair, but a rotten coar, many appear righteous, who are only righteous in appearance.

And if ſo, then a man may profeſs Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Cuſtom and faſhion may create a man a profeſſor, as you have many that wear this or that garb, not becauſe it keeps them warmer, or hath any excellency in it, more than another, but meerly for faſhion.

Many muſt have powdered hair, ſpotted faces, feathers in their Caps, &c. for no other end but becauſe they would be fools in faſhion.

So many profeſs Chriſtianity, not becauſe the means of grace warms the heart, or that they ſee any excellency in the ways of God above the world, but meerly to follow the faſhion; I wiſh I might not ſay it hath been true of our days, becauſe Religion hath been uppermoſt, therefore many have profeſſed it; it hath been the gaining trade, and then moſt would be of that trade.

Religion in credit makes many profeſſors, but few Proſelytes; but when religion ſuffers, then its confeſſors are no more than its converts; for cuſtom makes the former, but con-

conſcience the latter.

He that is a profeſſor of Religion, meerly for cuſtom ſake, when it proſpers, will never be a Martyr for Chriſts ſake, when Religion ſuffers.

He that owns the truth to live upon that, will diſown it, when it comes to live upon him.

They ſay, that when a houſe is decaying and falling, all the Rats and Mice will forſake it: while the houſe is firm, and they may ſhelter in the roof, they'l ſtay, but no longer, leſt in the decay the fall ſhould be upon them, and they that lived at top, ſhould lie at bottom.

My Brethren, may I not ſay, we have many that are the Vermin, the Rats and Mice of Religion, that would live under the roof of it, while they might have ſhelter in it? but when it ſuffers, *forſake* it, leſt it ſhould fall, & the fall ſhould be upon them: I am perſwaded this is not the leaſt reaſon why God hath brought the wheel upon the profeſſion of Religion, *viz.* to rid it of the Vermine.

He ſhakes the foundation of the

house, that these Rats and Mice may quit the roof, not to overturn it, but to rid them out of it, as the Husband-man fans the Wheat, that he may get rid of the Chaff. The Halcyon days of the Gospel provoke hypocrisie, but the sufferings of Religion prove sincerity.

Now then if custome and fashion make many men professors, then a man may profess Religion, *and yet be but almost a Christian.*

4. If many may perish under a profession of godliness, then a man may profess Religion, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

Now the Scripture is clear, that a man may perish under the highest profession of Religion, *Christ cursed the Fig-tree that had leaves and no fruit.* It is said, *Mat.* 8. 12. *That the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness.* Who were these? but they that were then the onely people of God in the world, by profession, *that had made a Covenant with him by sacrifice*, and yet these cast out.

Psa. 50. 5.

In *Mat.* 7. 22. you read of some that

that came and made boaſt of their profeſſion to Chriſt, hoping that might ſave them. *Lord* (ſay they) *have we not prophecyed in thy name, caſt out Devils in thy name, done many wonderful works in thy name?* Mat. 7. 22.

Now what ſaith our Lord Chriſt to this? *Then I will profeſs unto them I never knew you, depart from me.* Ver. 23.

Mark, here are them that propheſie in his name, and yet periſh in his wrath; in his name caſt out Devils, and then are caſt out themſelves; *in thy name do many wonderful works*, and yet periſh for wicked workers.

The profeſſion of Religion will no more keep many from periſhing, then calling a ſhip a Safe-guard, or the Good-ſpeed will keep her from drowning.

As many go to Heaven with the fear of hell in their hearts, ſo many go to hell with the name of Chriſt in their mouths.

Now then, if many may periſh under a profeſſion of godlineſs, then may a man be a high profeſſor of Religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Object. But is it not said by the Lord
Mat. 10. 32 Christ himself, *He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father in Heaven.*

Now for Christ to say he will confess us before the Father, is equivalent to a promise of eternal life; for if Jesus Christ confess us, God the Father will never disown us.

Sol. True, they that confess Christ, shall be confessed by him; and it is as true, that this confession is equivalent to a promise of salvation.

But now you must know that professing Christ, is not confessing him; for to profess Christ is one thing; to confess Christ is another; confession is a living testimony for Christ, in a time when religion suffers; profession may be only a lifeless formality, in a time when religion prospers.

To confess Christ, is to chuse his ways, and own them; to profess Christ is to plead for his waies, and yet live besides them.

Profession may be from a feigned love to the waies of Christ, but confession is from a rooted love to the person of Christ.

To

To profeſs Chriſt, is to own him when none deny him; to confeſs Chriſt, is to plead for him, and ſuffer for him, when others oppoſe him; hypocrites may be profeſſors, but the Martyrs are the true confeſſors; Profeſſion is a ſwimming down the ſtream, Confeſſion is a ſwimming againſt the ſtream.

Now many may ſwim with the ſtream (like the dead fiſh) that cannot ſwim againſt the ſtream with the living fiſh; many may profeſs Chriſt, that cannot confeſs Chriſt; and ſo notwithſtanding their profeſſion, yet are *but almoſt Chriſtians.*

4. To come yet nearer, *A man may go far in oppoſing his ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* How far a man may go in this Work, I ſhall ſhew you in ſeven Gradual Inſtances.

First, *A man may be convinced of ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*: For;

1. Conviction may be rational as well as ſpiritual; it may be from a natural conſcience enlightned by the

Word, without the effectual work of the Spirit applying sin to the heart.

2. Convictions may be worn out; they many times go off, and end not in sound conversion; saith the Isa. 26. 18. Church, *We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have brought forth wind.*

This is the complaint of the Church in reference to the unprofitableness of their afflictions, and it may be the complaint of most in reference to the unprofitableness of their convictions.

3. Many take convictions of sin to be conversion from thence, and so sit down and rest in their conviction. That is a sad complaint God makes of *Ephraim*, *Ephraim is an unwise* Hos. 13. 13 *son, for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children.* Now then, if convictions may be only from natural conscience, if they may be worn out, or may be mistaken and rested in for conversion, then a man may have convictions, and be but almost a Christian.

Secondly,

Secondly, *A man may mourn for sin, & yet be but almost a Christian;* so did *Saul*, so did *Esau*, for the loss of his birth-right, which was his sin, and therefore he is called by the Spirit of God, *Prophane Esau*, yet he sought it again carefully *with tears.* Heb. 12. 16, 17.

But doth not Christ pronounce them blessed that mourn? *Mat.* 5. 4. *Blessed are they that mourn.* *Object.*

Sure then if a man mourn for sin, he is in a good condition: you see, saith *Nazianzen*, τὸ συναγμῷ ἅ σωτηρίαν συνζευγμένην that salvation is joyned with sorrow. *Orat. 17. Greg Naz.*

I answer; It is true, that they who mourn for sin in the sense Christ there speaks of, are blessed; but all mourning for sin, doth not therefore render us blessed. *Sol.*

1. True mourning for sin, must flow from spiritual conviction of the evil, and vileness, and damnable natnre of sin.

Now all that mourn for sin don't do it from a through work of spiritual conviction upon the soul, they have not a right sense of the evil and vileness of sin.

2. True mourning for sin, is more for the evil that is in sin, then the evil that comes by sin; more, because it dishonours God, and wounds Christ, and grieves the Spirit, and makes the soul unlike God, than because it damnes the soul.

Now there are many that mourn for sin, not so much for the evil that is in it, as for the evil that it brings with it; there is mourning for sin in Hell, you read *of weeping and wailing there* Mat. 8. 12.

The damned are weeping and mourning to eternity, there is all sorrow, and no comfort; as in Heaven there is peace without trouble, joy without mourning, so in hell there is trouble without peace, mourning without joy, weeping and wailing inceſſantly; but it is for the evil they feel by sin, and not for the evil that is in sin.

So that a man may mourn for sin, and yet be but almost a Christian; it may grieve him to think of perishing for sin, when it doth not grieve him that he is defiled and polluted by sin.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, *A man may make large confession of sin, to God, to others, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

How ingeniously doth *Saul* confess his sin to *David*, *I have sinned* (saith he) *thou art more righteous then I. Behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.* 1 Sam. 24 17. & 26. 21.

So *Judas* makes a full confession, *I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.* Mat. 27. 4.

Yet *Saul* and *Judas* were both rejected of God; so that a man may confess sin, and yet be but almost a Christian.

But is not confession of sin, a character of a child of God? Doth not the Apostle say, *If we confess our sins, God is just and faithful to forgive them?* No man was ever kept out of Heaven for his confessed Badness, though many are kept out of heaven for their supposed goodness. *Object.* 1 Joh. 1 9. *Peccatorum confessio Synecdoche universam panitentiam hoc loco significat.* Vorst. in loc.

Judah in *Hebrew*, signifies *confession*; now *Judah* got the Kingdom from *Reuben*; confession of sin is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven.

There are some that confess sin, and are saved; there are others that confess sin and perish. *Sol.* 1. Many

1. Many confess sin meerly out of custom, and not out of conscience; you shall have many that will never pray but they will make a long confession of sin, and yet never feel the weight or burden of it upon their consciences.

2. Many will confess lesser sins, and yet conceal greater; like the Patient in *Plutarch*, that complained to his Physitian of his finger, when his Liver was rotten.

3. Many will confess sin in the general, or confess themselves sinners, and yet see little, and say less, of their particular sins; an implicite confession (as one saith) is almost as bad as implicite faith.

Where confession is right, it will be distinct, especially of those sins that were our chief sins.

So *David confesses his blood-guiltiness, and adultery*; so *Paul*, his *blasphemy, persecution*, and *injury against the Saints*. It is bad to hear men confess they are great sinners, and yet can't confess their sins.

Psa 51. 4, 14.

1 Tim. 1. 13, 15.

Though the least sin be too bad to be committed, yet there is no sin,

sin too bad to be confessed.

4. Many will confess sin, but it is only under extremity, that is not free and voluntary; *Pharoah* confesses his sin, but it was when judgement compelled him.

I have sinned against the Lord, saith he, but it was when he had had eight Plagues upon him.

Many do by their sins as Mariners do by their goods, cast them out in a storm, wishing for them again in a calm; confession should come like water out of a spring, which runs freely, not like water out of a still which is forced by fire.

5. Many confess their sins, but with no intent to forsake sin, they confess the sins they have committed, but dont leave the sins they have confessed.

Many men use confession as *Lewis* the Eleventh of *France* did his Crucifix; he would swear an Oath, and then kiss it, and swear again, and then kiss it again.

So, many sin, and then confess they do not well, but yet never strive to do better.

Mr.

Mr. *Torshel* tells a story of a Minister he knew, that would be often drunk, and when he came into the Pulpit, would confess it very lamentingly; and yet no sooner was he out of the Pulpit, but he would be drunk again; and this would he do as constantly as men follow their Trades.

Now then, if a man may confess sin meerly out of custom; if he may confess lesser sins, and yet conceal greater; if he may confess sin only in the general, or only under extremity, or if he may confess sin without any intent to forsake sin, then surely a man may confess sin, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Fourthly, *A man may forsake sin, and yet be but almost a Christian*; he may leave his lusts & wicked wayes which he sometimes lived in, and in the judgment of the world become a new man, and yet not be a new creature. *Simon Magus* when he hears
Acts 8.13. *Philip* preaching concerning the Kingdom of God, leaves his sorcery and witchcraft, and believes.

Object. But you'l say, this seems contrary to Scripture; for that sayes, *He that*

confesses and forsakes sin shall have mercy; But I confess sin, yea, not only so, but I also forsake sin; sure therefore his mercy is my portion, it belongs to me. Pro. 28. 13.

It is true, that where the soul forsakes from a right principle, after a right manner, to a right end; where he forsakes sin as sin, as being contrary to God, and the purity of his Nature. *Sol.*

This declares that soul to be right with God, and the promise shall be made good to it, *He shall find mercy.*

But now pray mind, there is a forsaking sin that is not right, but unsound.

1. Open sins may be deserted, and yet secret sins may be retained; now this is not a right forsaking, such a soul shall never find mercy: A man may be cured of a wound in his flesh, and yet may die of an impostume in his bowels.

2. A man may forsake sin, but not as sin; for he that forsakes sin as sin, forsakes all sin; *A quatenus ad omne valet consequentia*: it is impossible for

a

a man to forsake sin as sin, unless he forsakes all that he knows to be sin.

3. A man may let one sin go to hold another the faster; as a man that goes to Sea, would willingly save all his goods, but if the storm arises that he cannot, then he throws some overboard to lighten the vessel, and save the rest. So did they, *Acts* 27.38.

So the sinner chuses to keep all his sins, but if a storm arises in his conscience, why then he will heave one lust over-board to save the life of another.

4. A man may let all sin go, and yet be a sinner still; for there is the root of all sin in the heart, though the fruit be not seen in the life; the tree lives, though the boughs be lopt off.

As a man is a sinner before ever he acts sin, so (till grace renew him) he is a sinner though he leaves sin; for there is original sin in him enough
Psal. 51.5. to damn and destroy him.

5. Sin may be left and yet be loved; a man may forsake the life of sin, and yet retain the *love* of sin; now though leaving

leaving sin makes him almost a Christian; yet loving sin shews he is but almost a Christian.

It is a less evil to do sin and not love it, than to love sin and not to do it; for to do sin may argue only weakness of grace, but to love sin argues strength of lust; *What I hate, that do I*, Rom. 7. 15.

Sin is bad in any part of man, but sin in the affection is worse than sin in the conversation; for sin in the conversation may be only from infirmity, but sin in the affection is the fruit of choice and unregeneracy.

6. All sin may be chained, and yet the heart not changed, and so the nature of the sinner is the same as ever. A dog chain'd up is a dog still, as much as if it were loose to devour.

There may be a cessation of arms between enemies, and yet the quarrel may remain on foot still; there may be a making truce, where there is no making peace.

A Sinner may lay the weapons of sin out of his hand, and yet the enmity against God still remain in his heart.

There

There may be a truce, he may not sin against him, but there can be no peace till he be united unto him.

Restraining Grace holds in the Sinner, but it is Renewing Grace that changes the Nature? Now many are held in by Grace from being open Sinners, that are not renewed by Grace, and made true Believers.

Now then, if a man may forsake open sins, and retain secret sins; if he may forsake sin, but not as sin; if he may let one sin go, to hold another the faster; if a man may let all sin go, and yet be a sinner still; if sin may be left, and yet be loved; Finally, if all sin may be chained, and yet the heart not changed, then a man may forsake sin, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Fifthly, *A man may hate sin, and yet be but almost a Christian? Absolon* hated *Amnons* uncleanness, with his Sister *Thamar*, yea, his hatred was so great, as that he slew him for it, and yet *Absolom* was but a wicked man.

2 Sam. 22. 28.

But

But the Scripture makes it a ſign of a gracious heart to hate ſin; yea though a man do, through infirmity, fall into ſin, yet if he hates it, this is a proof of grace. *Paul* proves the ſincerity of his heart, and the truth of his grace, by this hatred of ſin, though he committed it, *Rom.* 7. 15. *What I hate, that do I.* *Object.*

Nay, what is grace, but *conformitas cum archetypo*, a conformity of the ſoul to God, to love as God loves, to hate as God hates! now God hates ſin; it is one part of his holineſs, to hate all ſin.

And if I hate ſin, then am I conformed to God; and if I am conformed to God, then am I altogether a Chriſtian. *Sol.*

It is true, that there is a hatred of ſin, which is a ſign of grace, & which flows from a principle of grace, and is grace; as for inſtance.

To hate ſin, as it is an offence to God, a wrong to his Majeſty; to hate ſin, as it is a breach of the command, and ſo a wicked controuling Gods Will, which is the only rule of goodneſs, to hate ſin, as being a diſ-

diſingenuous *tranſgreſſion* of that law of love eſtabliſhed in the blood and death of Chriſt, and ſo in a degree *a crucifying of Chriſt afreſh.*

To hate ſin as being a grieving and quenching the Spirit of God, as all ſin in its nature is;

Thus to hate ſin is grace; and thus every true Chriſtian hates ſin.

But though every man that hath grace, hates ſin; yet every man that hates ſin hath not grace. For,

A man may hate ſin from other principles, not as it is a wrong to *God*, or a wounding Chriſt, or a grieving the Spirit, for then he would hate all ſin, for there is no ſin but hath this in the nature of it. But,

1. A man may hate ſin for the ſhame that attends it, more than for the evil that is in it.

Some ſinners there are who *declare*
Iſa. 3. 9. *their ſin, as* Sodom, *and hide it not.*
They are ſet down in the *ſeat of the*
Pſal. 1. 1. *ſcornful, they glory in their ſhame*, Phil. 3. 19.

But now others there are who are aſhamed of ſin, and therefore hate it, not for the ſins ſake, but the ſhames ſake.

ſake. This made *Abſalom* hate *Amnons* uncleanneſs becauſe it brought ſhame upon him and his Siſter.

2. A man may hate ſin more in others than in himſelf; ſo doth the Drunkard, he hates drunkenneſs in another, and yet practices it himſelf; the Lyar hates falſhood in another, but likes it in himſelf.

Now he that hates ſin from a principle of grace, hates ſin moſt in himſelf; he hates ſin in others, but he loaths moſt the ſins of his own heart.

3. A man may hate one ſin, as being contrary to another. There is a great contrariety between ſin & ſin, between luſt and luſt: It is the excellency of the life of grace, that it is a uniform life; there is no one grace contrary to another; the graces of Gods ſpirit are different, but not differing; faith, & love, and holineſs are all one; they conſiſt together at the ſame time, in the ſame ſubject, nay they can't be parted; there can be no faith without love, no love without holineſs; and ſo on the other hand, no holineſs without

out love, no love without faith.

So that this makes the life of grace an eaſie & excellent life; but now the life of ſin is a diſtracting contradictious life, wherein a man is a Servant to contrary luſts; the luſt of pride & prodigality, is contrary to the luſt of covetouſneſs, &c.

Tit. 3. 3.

Now when one luſt gets to be the Maſter-luſt in the ſoul, then that works a hatred of its contrary; where covetouſneſs gets the heart, there the heart hates pride; and where pride gets uppermoſt in the heart, there the heart hates covetouſneſs.

Thus a man may hate ſin, not from a principle of grace, but from the contrariety of luſt.

He don't hate any ſin as it is ſin, but he hates it as being contrary to his beloved ſin.

Now then, if a man may hate ſin for the ſhame that attends it; if he may hate ſin more in others, then in himſelf; & if he may hate one ſin as being contrary to another, then he may hate ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Sixth-

Sixthly, *A man may make great vows and promiſes, he may have ſtrong purpoſes, and reſolutions againſt ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

Thus did *Saul*, he promiſes and reſolves againſt his ſin, *Return my Son David*, ſaith he, *for I will no more do thee harm.* What promiſes and reſolves did *Pharoah* make againſt that ſin of detaining Gods people? Saith he, *I will let the people go, that they may do Sacrifice to the Lord*; and again, *I will let ye go, and ye ſhall ſtay no longer*, Exod. 9. 28. 1 Sam. 26 21. Exod. 8. 8.

And yet *Saul* and *Pharoah* both periſhed in their ſins; the greateſt purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin will not make a man a Chriſtian: For,

1. Purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin, never hurt ſin; we ſay, threatned folk live long, and truly ſo do threatned ſins. It is not new purpoſes, but a new nature that muſt help us againſt ſin; purpoſes may bring to the birth, but without a new nature, *there is no ſtrength to bring forth.*

The new nature is the beſt ſoyl for holy purpoſes to grow in; other wiſe they wither and die, like plants in an improper ſoyl. 2. Trou-

2. Trouble and afflictions may provoke us to large purposes & promises against sin for the future; what more common, than to vow, and not to pay; to make vows in the day of trouble, which we make no conscience to pay in the day of peace?

Many covenant against sin, when trouble is upon them; and then sin against their covenant, when it is removed from them.

It was a brave rule that *Pliny* in one of his Epistles gave his friend to live by:

Ut tales esse perseveremus sani, quales nos futuros esse profitemur infirmi;

That we should continue to be such when we are well, as we promise to be when we are sick.

Many are our sick-bed promises, but we are no sooner well, but we grow sick of our promises.

3. Purposes and resolves against sin for the future, may be only a temptation to put off repentance for the present; Satan may put a man on to good purposes, to keep him from present attempts.

He knows whatever we purpose, yet

yet the ſtrength of performance is not in our ſelves.

He knows that purpoſes for the future, are a putting God off for the preſent; they are a ſecret will not to a preſent opportunity. That is a notable paſſage, *Luk* 9.59. *Follow me*, ſaith Chriſt to the two men; Now ſee what anſwers they give to Chriſt, *Suffer me firſt to go bury my Father*, ſaith one; this man purpoſes to follow Chriſt; only he would ſtay to bury his Father: Saith the other, *Lord, I will follow thee, but let me firſt go and bid them farewel which are at my houſe*, v. 61. I will follow thee, but only I would firſt go and take my leave of my friends, or ſet my houſe in order.

And yet we do not find that ever they followed Chriſt, notwithſtanding their fair purpoſes.

4. Nature unſanctified may be ſo far wrought on, as to make great promiſes and purpoſes againſt ſin.

1. A natural may may have great convictions of ſin, from the workings of an enlightned conſcience.

2. He may approve of the Law of God.

3. He may have a deſire to be ſaved.

Now theſe three together, The workings of conſcience, The ſight of the goodneſs of the Law, A deſire to be ſaved, may bring forth in a man great purpoſes againſt ſin, and yet he may have no heart to perform his own purpoſes. This was much-what the caſe of them, *Deut.* 5. ſay they to *Moſes*, verſ 27. *Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God ſhall ſay, and tell thou it to us, and we will hear it and do it.*

This is a fair promiſe, and ſo God takes it, *v.* 28. *I have heard the words of this people, they have well ſaid all that they have ſpoken.* So ſaid, and ſo done, had been well; but it was better ſaid then done; for though they had a tongue to promiſe, yet they had no heart to perform; and this God ſaw, therefore ſaid he, *v.* 29. *O that there were ſuch a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my Commandments always, that it might be well with them.*

They promiſe to fear God and keep his Commandments, but they wanted

wanted a new heart to perform what an unſanctified heart had promiſed.

It fares with men in this caſe, as it did with that ſon in the Goſpel, that ſaid, *He would go into the Vineyard, but went not.* Mat. 21. 30

Now then if purpoſes and promiſes againſt ſin, never hurt ſin; if preſent afflictions may draw out large promiſes; if they may be the fruit of temptation, or if from nature unſanctified; ſurely then a man may promiſe and purpoſe much againſt ſin, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

Seventhly, *A man may maintain a ſtrife and combat againſt ſin in himſelf and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* So did *Balaam*, when he went to curſe the people of God, he had a great ſtrife within himſelf; *How ſhall I curſe* (ſaith he) *where God hath not curſed? Or how ſhall I defie, whom the Lord hath not defied?* Num. 23. 8

And did not *Pilate* ſtrive againſt his ſin, when he ſaid to the Jews, *Shall I crucifie your King? What evil hath he done? I am innocent of the blood of this juſt man.* Mark 15. 12, 14. Mat. 27. 24

But you will ſay, Is not this an argu- *Object.*

ment of grace, when there is a striving in the soul against sin? for what should oppose sin in the heart but grace? The Apostle makes *the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh,* to be an argument of grace in the heart. Now I find this strife in my heart; though the remainders of corruption sometimes break out into actual sins, yet I find a striving in my soul against sin.

Gal. 5. 17.

Sol. It is true, there is a striving against sin, which is only from grace, and is proper to beleivers; and there is a striving against sin, which is not from grace, and therefore may be in them that are not beleivers.

There is a strife against sin in one and the same faculty, the will against the will, the affection against the affection, and this is that which the Apostle calls *the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit*; that is, the striving of the unregenerate part against the regenerate, and this is ever in the same faculty, and is proper to beleivers only.

An unbeleiver never finds this strife in himself, this strife cannot be in him,

him, it is impoſſible (as ſuch) that is, while he is on this ſide a ſtate of grace.

But then there is a ſtriving againſt ſin in divers faculties; and this is the ſtrife that is in them that are not Believers; there the ſtrife is between the Will and the conſcience; Conſcience enlightned and terrified with the fear of hell and damnation, that is againſt ſin; the Will and Affection (not being renewed) they are for ſin. *Video meliora proboq; deteriora ſequor.*

And this cauſes great tuggings and ſtrong combates many times in the ſinners heart.

Thus it was with the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. Conſcience convinced them of the Divinity of Chriſt, and of the truth of his being the Son of God; and yet a perverſe will and carnal affections cry out, *Crucifie him, Crucifie him.*

Conſcience pleaded for him, he had a witneſs in their boſomes, and yet their wills were bent againſt him, and therefore they are are ſaid *to have reſiſted the ſpirit*, viz. the workings and convictions of the Spirit in their Conſciences, *Act.* 7. 51.

And this is the caſe of many ſinners; when Will and Affections are for ſin, and plead for it, Conſcience is againſt it, and many times frights the ſoul from the doing of it.

And hence men take that which oppoſes ſin in them to be grace, when it is onely the work of a natural conſcience; they conclude the ſtrife is between grace and ſin, the regenerate and unregenerate part, when alas it is no other then the contention of a natural conſcience againſt a corrupt will and affections.

And if ſo, then a man may have great ſtrifes & combates againſt ſin in him, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

5. *A man may deſire grace, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; ſo did *the five fooliſh Virgins*, Mat. 25. 8. *Give us of your oyl*; what was that but true grace? it was that oyl that lighted the wiſe Virgins into the Bridegrooms Chamber.

They do not onely deſire to enter in, but they deſire oyl to light them in; wicked men may deſire heaven, deſire a Chriſt to ſave them; there is none ſo wicked upon earth, but deſire to be happy in heaven. But

But now here are they that deſire grace as well as glory, and yet theſe are but almoſt Chriſtians.

But is it not commonly taught, *that deſires of grace are grace?* nay, doth not our Lord Chriſt himſelf make it ſo? *bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled.* Mat 5. 6. *Object.*

It is true, that there are ſome deſires of grace which are grace: As, *Sol.*

1. When a man deſires grace from a right ſenſe of his natural ſtate; when he ſees the vileneſs of ſin, and the woful, defiled, and loathſom condition he is in by reaſon of ſin, and therefore deſires the grace of Chriſt to renew and change him, this is grace. This ſome make to be the loweſt degree of ſaving faith.

2. When a man joyns proportionable endeavours to his deſires; doth not only wiſh for grace, but work for grace, ſuch deſires are grace.

3. When a mans deſires are conſtant and unceſſant, that ceaſe not but in the attainment of their Object, ſuch deſires are true grace.

They are a part of the eſpecial work of the Spirit.

They do really partake of the nature of grace; now it is a known maxim, *Quicquid participat de natura totius, eſt pars totius*: That which partakes of the nature of the whole, is a part of the whole; the ſilings of gold are gold. The Sea is not more really water then the leaſt drop; the flame is not more really fire, then the leaſt ſpark; for theſe do *participare de natura totius*.

But though all true deſires of grace, are grace; yet all deſires of grace, are not true: For,

1. A man may deſire grace, but not for it ſelf, but for ſomewhat elſe; not grace for graces ſake, but for heavens ſake; He don't deſire grace, that his nature may be changed, his heart renewed, the Image of God ſtampt upon him, and his luſts ſubdued in him.

Theſe bleſſed deſires are found only in true believers.

The true Chriſtian only can deſire grace for graces ſake; but the almoſt Chriſtian may deſire grace for heavens ſake.

2. A man may deſire grace without

out proportionable endeavours after grace; many are good at wishing, bad at working; like him that lay in the grass on a Summers day, crying out, *O si hoc esset laborare!* O that this were to work!

Solomon saith, *the desire of the slothful kills him?* How so? *For his hands refuse to labour*, Prov. 21. 25. He perisheth in his desires.

Virtutem exoptant contabescuntque relictæ. Pers.

The beleiver joyns desires and endeavours together; *One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after*, Psa. 27. 4.

Impii non curant quærere quem tamen desiderant invenire, cupientes consequi, sed non & sequi. Bern.

3. A mans desires of grace may be unseasonable; thus the *foolish Virgins* desired oyl when it was too late.

The beleivers desires are seasonable, he desires grace in the season of grace, and seeks in a time when it may be found. *The wise mans heart knows both time and Judgement.* He knows his season, and hath wisdom to improve it. Eccl. 8. 5.

The silly sinner doth all his works out of season; he sins away the seasons of grace, and then desires grace when the season is over; the sinner doth all too late, as *Esau* desired the

Sero sapiunt Phryges. blessing when it was too late, and therefore he lost it, whereas, had he come sooner, he had obtained it.

Most men are like *Epimetheus*, wise too late, they come when the Market is done; when God hath shut in shop, then they have oyl to get.

When they lye upon their deathbeds, then they desire holy hearts.

4. Desires of Grace in many are very inconstant and fleeting, like the *morning dew that quickly passes away.* Hos. 6. 4. Or like *Jonahs Gourd*, that springs up Jon. 4. 6, 7 in a night, & withers in a night; they have no root in the heart, and therefore quickly perish; now then if a man may desire grace, but not for graces sake; if desires may be without endeavours; if a man may desire grace when tis too late; if these desires may be but fleeting and inconstant, then may a man desire grace, and yet be but almost a Christian.

6. *A man may tremble at the Word of God, and yet be but almost a Christi-* Dan. 5. 6. *an*, as *Belshazar* did at the hand writing upon the wall.

Object. But is not that a note of sincerity and truth of grace, to tremble at the word?

Word? doth not God say, *To him will I look, that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembles at my Word?* Isa. 66. 2.

There is a two-fold trembling. *Sol.*

First, One is, when the Word discovers the guilt of sin, and the wrath of *God* that belongs to that guilt; this where conscience is awake, causes trembling & amazement; thus when *Paul preached of righteousness and judgement*, it is said, *Felix* trembled. Act. 24. 25

Secondly, There is a trembling which arises from a holy dread & reverence of the Majesty of *God*, speaking in his Word; this is only found in true believers, & is that which keeps the soul low in its own eys. Therefore mark how the words run in *Isa.* 66. 2. *To him will I look that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trembles at my Word.*

God don't make the promise to him that trembles at the Word; for *the Devils believe and tremble*; the Word of God can make the proudest flouteſt sinner in the world to shake and tremble; but it is *to the poor and contrite spirit that trembles*; Where trembling is the fruit of a spirit bro- James 2. 19.

ken

ken for sin, and low in its own eyes, there will God look.

Now many tremble at the Word, but not from poverty of spirit, not from a heart broken for sin, and low in its own eyes; not from a sense of the Majesty and holiness of God, and therefore notwithstanding they tremble at the Word, yet are they but almost Christians.

Isa. 58. 2. 7. *A man may delight in the Word, and Ordinances of God, and yet be but almost a Christian*, Isa. 58. 2. *They take delight in approaching to God.*

And it is said of that ground, *Mat.* 13. 20. That it *received the Word with joy*, and yet it was but stony ground.

Object. But is it not made a character of a godly man to delight in the Word of God? doth not *David* say, he is a Psal. 1. 2. *blessed man that delights in the Law of the Lord?*

Sol. There is a delighting in the Word, which flows from grace, and is a proof of blessedness.

1. He that delights in the word because of its spirituality, he is a Christian indeed; the more spiritual the Ordinances are, the more doth a gracious

ous heart delight in them.

2. When the Word comes close to the conscience, rips up the heart, and discovers sin, and yet the soul delights in it notwithstanding; this is a sign of Grace.

3. When delight arises from that communion that is to be had with God there; this is from a principle of grace in the soul.

But there may be a delight in the Word, where there is no grace.

1. There are many delight in the Word, because of the *eloquence* of the Preacher; they delight not so much in the Truths delivered, as in the dress they are delivered in.

Thus it is said of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that he was to them *as a very loving song of one that hath a pleasant voice.* Ezek. 33. 32.

2. There are very many delight to hear the Word, that yet take no delight to do it; so saith God of them in Ezek. 33. 2. *They delight to hear my words, but they do them not.* Ezek. 33. 2.

Now then, if a man may delight in the Word, more because of the *eloquence* of the Preacher, than because of

of the ſpiritualneſs of the matter; if he may delight to hear the Word,& yet not delight to do it, then he may delight in the Word, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

8. *A man may be a member of the Church of Chriſt, he may joyn himſelf to the people of God, partake with them in all Ordinances, and ſhare of all Church-priviledges, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.*

So the *five fooliſh Virgins* joyned themſelves to the wiſe, and walked together.

Many may be *members* of the church of Chriſt, and yet not members of Chriſt the head of the Church.

There was a mixed multitude came up with the Church of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, they joyned themſelves to the *Iſraelites*, owned their *God*, left their own Countrey, and yet in heart *Egyptians* notwithſtanding.

All are not Iſrael that are of Iſrael, Rom. 9.6.

The Church in all Ages hath had unſound members; *Cain* had communion with *Abel*, *Iſhmael* dwelt in the ſame houſe with *Iſaac*, *Judas* was in

in fellowship with the Apostles, and so was *Demas* with the rest of the Disciples.

There will be some Bran in the finest Meal; the Draw-net of the Gospel catches bad fish as well as good; the Tares and the Wheat grow together, and it will be so till the harvest.

God hath a Church where there are no *members* but such as are true *members* of Christ, but it is in heaven, it is *the Church of the first-born*; there are no hypocrites, no rotten, unsound professors, none but *the spirits of just men made perfect*; all is pure Wheat that God layeth up in that Garner; there the Chaff is separated to unquenchable fire. Heb. 12. 23. Mat. 3. 12.

But in the Church on Earth, the Wheat and the Chaff lye in the same heap together; the *Samaritans* will be near of Kin to the *Jews* when they are in *prosperity*; so while the Church of God flourisheth in the World, many will joyn to it, they will seem *Jews*, though they are *Samaritans*; and seem Saints, though yet they are no better than almost Christians.

9. *A man may have great hopes of Heaven,*

Heaven, great hopes of being saved, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Indeed there is a hope of heaven, which is *the anchor of the soul, sure and* Heb.6.19. *stedfast*; it never miscarries, and it is known by four properties.

First, It is a hope which purifies the heart, purges out sin, 1 *Joh.*3.3. *He that hath this hope, purifies himself even as God is pure.*

That soul that truly hopes to enjoy God truly endeavors to be like *God.*

Secondly, It is a hope which fills the Rom.5.2. heart with gladness; *We rejoyce in hope of the glory of God.*

Ps.130.5. *Thirdly*, It is a hope that is founded upon the promise; as there can be no true faith without a promise, so nor any true hope; faith applies the promise, and hope expects the fulfilling the promise; faith relies upon the truth of it, & hope waits for the good of it; faith gives interest, hope expects livery and seisin.

Fourthly, It is a hope that is wrought by God himself in the soul; who is therefore called *The God* Rom.15. 13. *of hope*, as being the Author as well as the Object of Hope.

Now

Now he that hath this hope ſhall never miſcarry; This is a right Hope, the hope of the true believer, *Chriſt in you the hope of glory.* Col.1.27.

But then, as there is a true and ſound hope, ſo there is a falſe & rotten hope; & this is much more common, as baſtard pearls are more frequently worn than true pearls.

There is nothing more common then to ſee men big with groundleſs hopes of Heaven; As.

1. A man may have great hope that hath no grace; you read of the hope of hypocrites, *Job.*8.13,14.

The performance of duties is a *proof* of their hope; the fooliſh Virgins would never have done what they did, had they thought they ſhould have been ſhut out after all.

Many profeſſors would not be at ſuch pains in duties as they are, if they did not hope for Heaven.

Hope is the great motive to action; deſpair cuts the ſinews of all endeavours; this is one reaſon why the damned in hell ceaſe acting toward an alteration of their ſtate, becauſe deſpair hath taken hold of them; if there

there were any hope in hell, they would up and be doing there.

So that there may be great hopes where there is no grace; experience proves this; formal professors are men of no grace, but yet men of great hopes; nay, many times you shall find that none fear more about their eternal condition, than they that have most cause of hope; and none hope more, than they that have most cause of fear.

As interest in God may sometimes be without hope, so hope in God may be without interest.

2. A man may hope in the mercy and goodness, and power of God, without eying the promise, and this is the hope of most; God is full of mercy and goodness, and therefore willing to save; and he is infinite in power, & therefore able to save; why therefore should I not rest on him?

Now it is presumption, and therefore sin, to hope in the mercy of *God*, otherwise than by eying the promise; for the promise is the Channel of mercy, the Pipe through which it is conveyed; all the blessedness the Saints

Saints enjoy in Heaven, is no other than what is the fruit of the promise relyed on, and hoped for here on Earth.

A man hath no warrant to hope in God, but by vertue of the promise.

3. A man may hope for Heaven, and yet not cleanse his heart, nor depart from his secret sins; that hope of salvation that is not accompanied with heart-purification, that is a vain hope.

4. A man may hope for heaven, and yet be doing the work of hell; he may hope for salvation, and yet be working out his own damnation, and so perish in his confidences.

This is the case of many, *Male agendo sperant, & sperando pereunt*; like the Water-man that looks one way, and rows another; many have their eyes on heaven, whose hearts are in the earth; they hope in God, but chuse him not for a portion; they hope in God, but do not love him as the best good, and therefore are like to have no portion in him, nor good by him; but are like to perish without him, notwithstanding all their hopes,

hopes. *Job* 27.8. *What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God takes away his ſoul?*

Now then, if a man may have great hope of heaven, that hath no grace; if he may hope in mercy, without eying the promiſe; if he may hope without heart-purifying; if he may hope for heaven, and yet do the work of Hell; ſurely then a man may have great hopes of heaven, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

10. *A man may be under great and viſible changes, and theſe wrought by the Miniſtry of the Word, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian. Herod* was; it is ſaid, when *he heard John Baptiſt, he did many things, and heard him gladly.* *Saul* was under a great change, when he met the Lord's Prophets, he turned Prophet too.

Mar. 6.20

1 Sam. 10. 10. Nay, it is ſaid, *v.* 9. of that 1 *Sam.* 10. *that God gave him another heart.*

Now was not this a work of grace? and was not *Saul* here truly converted? one would think he was, but yet indeed he was not.

For though it is ſaid, God gave him

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another heart, yet it is not ſaid, that God gave him a *new heart*.

Ther is a great difference between לב אחר (*lebh acher*) another heart, and לב חדש (*lebh chadaſh*) a new heart: God gave him another heart to fit him for a Ruler, but gave him not a *new heart* to make him a believer; another heart may make another man; but it is a *new heart*, that makes a *new man*.

Again, *Simon Magus* is a great proof of this truth, he was under a great and viſible change; of a *Sorcerer*, he was turned to a *Believer*; he left his Witch-crafts and Sorceries, and embraced the Goſpel; was not this a great change?

If the drunkard doth but leave his drunkenneſs, the ſwearer his oaths, the prophane perſon his prophaneſs; they think this is a gracious change, and their ſtate is now good; alas, *Simon Magus* did not only leave his ſins, but had a kind of converſion; for *he believed and was baptized.* Act. 8. 13.

But is not that man that is changed a true Chriſtian? *Object.*

Not

Sol. Not every change makes a man a Chriſtian; indeed there is a change, that whoever is under it, he is a true Chriſtian.

When a mans heart is ſo changed, as that it is renewed, when *old things are done away, and all is become new*; when the καινὴ κτίσις, the new creature is wrought in the ſoul; when a man is turned *from darneſs to light, from the power of Satan to God*; when the mind is enlightned, the will renewed, the affections made heavenly, then a man is a Chriſtian indeed.

2 Cor. 5. 17.

Act. 26. 18

But now you muſt know that every change is not this change. For,

1. There is a civil change, a moral change, as well as a ſpiritual and ſupernatural change.

Many men are changed in a moral ſenſe, and one may ſay, they are become *new men*, but they are in heart and nature the ſame men ſtill; They are not changed in a ſpiritual and ſupernatural ſenſe, and therefore it cannot be ſaid of them, they are become *new creatures*.

Reſtraining grace may cauſe a mo-

ra

ral change, but it is renewing grace that muſt cauſe a ſaving change.

Now many are under reſtraining grace, and ſo changed morally, that are not under the power of renewing grace, and ſo changed ſavingly.

2. There is an outward change, as well as an inward change; the outward change is often without the inward, though the inward change is never without the outward.

A mans heart cannot be ſanctified, but it will influence the life; but a mans life may be reformed, and yet never affect or influence the heart.

3. A man may be converted from a courſe of prophaneſs, to a form of godlineſs; from a filthy converſation, to a fair profeſſion, and yet the heart the ſame, in one and the other.

A rotten Poſt may be gilt without, and yet unſound within. *Hypocrita in verbis ſanctus, in corde vanus; intus Nero, foris Cato. Audi, nemo melius; ſpecta, nemo pejus.*

It is common to have the outſide of the Cup and the Platter made clean, and yet the inſide foul and filthy. Mat. 23. 25.

Now

Now then, if a man may be *changed* morally, and yet not ſpiritually; outwardly, and yet not inwardly; from a courſe of prophaneſs, to a lifeleſs form of godlineſs, then a man may be under great and viſible changes, and yet be no more than almoſt a Chriſtian.

I do not ſpeak this to diſcountenance any change, ſhort of that that is ſpiritual, but to awaken you to ſeek after that change, which is more than moral.

It is good to be outwardly reformed, but it is better to be ſavingly renewed.

I know how natural it is for men to take up with any thing like a work of converſion, though it be not converſion; and reſting in that, they periſh eternally.

Beloved, let me tell you, there is no change, no converſion can ſtead your ſouls in the day of Judgement, on this ſide that ſaving work, which is wrought on the ſoul by the Spirit of God, renewing you throughout; the ſober man without this change, ſhall as ſurely go to Hell as the beaſtly drunkard. Mora-

1 Theſ. 5. 23.

Morality and Civility may commend us to men, but not to God. They are of no value in the procurement of an eternal salvation.

A man may go far in an outward change, & yet not be one step nearer Heaven, then he that never was under any change; nay, he may be (in some sense) farther off, as Christ saith, *The Scribes and Pharisees were farther from Heaven*, with all their shew of godliness, then *Publicans and Harlots* in all their sin and uncleanness. Mat.21.31

Because resting in a false work, a partial change, we neglect to seek after a true and saving change.

There is nothing more common then to mistake our state, and by overweaning thoughts misjudge our condition, and so perish in our own delusions.

The World is full of these foolish Builders, that lay the foundation of their hopes of eternal salvation upon the sand. Mat.7.26.

Now my Brethren, would you not mistake the way to Heaven, & perish in a delusion? would you not be found fools at last? for none are such fools as

the ſpiritual fool, who is a fool in the great buſineſs of ſalvation.

Would you not be fools for your ſouls, and for eternity? O then labour after, and pray for a through work of converſion, beg of God that he would make a ſaving change in your ſouls, that *you may be altogether Chriſtians*; all other changes below this ſaving change, this heart-change, make us *but almoſt Chriſtians*.

11. *A man may be very zealous in the matter of religion, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian: Jehu* did not only ſerve God, and do what he commanded him, but was very zealous in his ſervice, 2 King. 10. 16. *Come with me, and ſee my zeal for the Lord of Hoſts*; and yet in all this *Jehu* was a very Hypocrite; *Joaſh* was a great reformer in *Jehojadahs* time; it is ſaid, *He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, all the days of* Jehojada *the Prieſt*; but when *Jehojada* died, *Joah* his zeal for *God* died with him, and he becomes a very wretch.

2 Chron. 29. 2. Ver. 17, 17

Object. But the Apoſtle makes zeal to be a note of ſound Chriſtianity, *Gal.* 4. 18. *It is good to be zealouſly affected in a good*

good thing; nay, it ſeems to be the non-ſuch qualification for obtaining eternal life, *The Kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* Mat. 11. 12.

Sol. It is true, there is a zeal, which is good, and which renders the ſoul highly acceptable to God, a zeal that never miſſes of Heaven and ſalvation.

Now this is a zeal which is a celeſtial fire, the true temper and heat of all the affections to God and Chriſt; *qui non zelat, non amat.*

It is a zeal wrought and kindled in the ſoul by the Spirit of God, who firſt works it, and then ſets it on work.

It is a zeal that hath the Word of God for its guide, directing it in working both in regard of its object and end, manner and meaſure.

It is a zeal that checks ſin, and forwards the Heavenly life.

It is a zeal that makes the glory of God its chief end, which ſwallows up all by-ends; *The zeal of thine houſe hath eaten me up.* Joh. 2. 17.

But now all zeal is not this kind of zeal; there is a falſe zeal, as well as a

true; every grace hath its counterfeit; as there is fire, which is true Heavenly fire on the Altar; so there is strange fire; *Nadab* and *Abihu* Lev. 10.1. *offered strange fire upon Gods Altar.*

There are several kinds of zeal, none of which are true and sound, but false and counterfeit.

I'le instance in eight particulars.

First, *There is a blind zeal*, a zeal without knowledge, *Rom.* 10.2. *They have a zeal* (saith the Apostle) *but not according to knowledge*, now as knowledge without zeal is fruitless, so zeal without knowledge is dangerous; it is like Wild-fire in the hand of a fool, Mat. 17.15 or like the devil in the man possess'd, that threw him sometimes into the fire, sometimes into the water; *Zelus* Bernard. *absq; scientia, quo vehementius irruit, eo gravus corruit.*

The eye is the light of the body, and the understanding is the light of the soul; now as the body without the light of the eye, cannot go without stumbling; so the soul without the light of the mind, cannot act without erring.

Zeal

Zeal without knowledge, is like an *ignis fatuus* in a dark night, that leads a Traveller out of his way, into the Boggs and Mire. This was the zeal of *Paul*, while he was a *Phariſee*, *I was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day, and I perſecuted this way unto the death.* Act. 22. 3, 4.

And ſo *Act.* 26.9. *I verily thought with my ſelf, I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus of* Nazareth; So *Phil.* 3. 6. *Concerning zeal perſecuting the Church.*

Such a zeal was that in *Joh.* 16. 2. *They ſhall put you out of the Synagogue,* (ſilence you, you ſhall not be ſuffered to preach) *yea, the time comes, that who ever kills you, will think that he doth God ſervice.* This is great zeal, but yet it is a blind zeal, and that God abhors. * Mar. 23. 23. *Lyra* hath theſe very words, *Filius per profeſſionem factam in religione excuſatur ſubveniendo parentibus.*

Secondly, *There is a partial zeal*; in one thing fire-hot, in another key-cold; zealous in this thing, and yet careleſs in another; many are firſt Table Chriſtians, zealous in the duties of the firſt Table, and yet neglect the ſecond; thus the *Phariſees* were zealous in their *Corban**, & yet unnatural

tural to their parents, ſuffering them to ſtarve and periſh.

Others are ſecond-table Chriſtians, zealous in the duties of the ſecond Table, but neglect the firſt; more for Righteouſneſs among men, than for Holineſs towards God.

But now he whoſe Religion ends with the firſt Table, or begins with the ſecond, he is a fool in his profeſſion, for he is but almoſt a Chriſtian.

The woman that was for the dividing the child, was not the true mother; and he that is for dividing the Commands, is not a true believer.

2 Kings 10.16. comp. with ver. 29. *Jehu* was zealous againſt *Ahab's* houſe, but not ſo againſt *Jeroboam's Calves*; many are zealous againſt ſins of *opinion*, that yet uſe no zeal againſt the ſins of their converſation.

Jo. Fernel. de febribus l.4.c.19. Now as we know that the ſweat of the whole *body* is a ſign of health, but the ſweat of ſome one part only ſhews a diſtemper, & therefore Phyſitians do reckon ſuch a heat to be ſymptomatical.

So where zeal reaches to every command of God alike, that is a ſign of a ſound conſtitution of Soul; but

but where it is partial: where a man is hot in one part, and cold in another, that is Symptomatical of ſome inward ſpiritual diſtemper.

Thirdly, *There is a miſplaced zeal*, fixed upon unfutable and diſproportionable Objects. Many are very zealous in trifling things that are not worth it, and trifle in the things that moſt require it; like the *Phariſees*, that were diligent Tithers of *mint*, *anniſe*, & *commin*; but neglected the τὰ βαρύτερα τῦ νόμε, the *weightier matters of the Law*, *judgement*, *mercy*, *and faith*. They had no zeal for theſe, though very hot for the other; many are more zealous for a Ceremony, than for the ſubſtance of Religion; more zealous for bowing at the name of Jeſus, than for conformity to the life of Jeſus; more zealous for a holy veſtment, then for a holy life; more zealous for the inventions of men, then for the inſtitutions of Chriſt.

Mat. 23. 23

Heathens will riſe up in judgment againſt ſuch men.

This is a ſuperſtitious zeal, and uſually found in men unconverted, whom grace never was wrought in. When was it that *Paul* was ſo *exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his Fathers*,

Deus non ſuperſtitione coli vult ſed pietate, ſaid Cicero.

Fathers, as he saith, *Gal.* 1 14. but only when he was in his wretched and unconverted state? as you may see in the next verses, *But when it pleased God to call me by his grace, then I conferred not with flesh and blood.* Gal. 1. 15, 16. *Paul* had another kind of zeal then, acted by other kind of principles.

Fourthly, *There is a selfish zeal*, that hath a mans own ends for its motive; *Jehu* was very zealous, but it was not so much for God, as for the Kingdom; not so much in obedience to the command, as in design to step into the Throne; and therefore God threatens to punish him for that very thing he commands him to do, *Hos.* 1. 4. *I will avenge the blood of* Jezreel, *upon the house of* Jehu. Because he shed that blood to gratifie his lust, not to obey God. So *Simeon* and *Levi* pretend great zeal for Circumcision, seem very zealous for the honour of Gods Ordinance, when in truth their zeal was for Covetousness, and revenge upon the *Shechemites*. Gen. 34. 14, 15. comp. with vers. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.

Fifthly, *There is an outside zeal*, such was that of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, they

they would not eat with unwashed hands, but yet would live in unseen sins; they would wash the cup often, but the heart seldom; paint the outside, but neglect the inside. *Jehu* was a mighty outside reformer, 2 *Kin.* 10. 16. but he reformed nothing within, for he had a base heart under all, *v.* 31. *Jehu took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord with all his heart.* Though his fleece was fair, his liver was rotten.

Ne appetat quisquam ultra videri quam est, ut possit ultra esse quam videtur. Greg.

Our Lord Christ observes of the *Pharisees*, *They pray to be seen of men*; and fast so, *that they may appear to men to fast*, Mat. 6. 5, 16.

Sixthly, *There is a forinsick zeal*, that runs out upon others, like the candle in the lanthorn that sends all the heat out at top, or as the lewd Woman *Solomon* mentions, whose *feet abide not in her own house*. Pro. 7. 11.

Many are hot and high against the sins of others, and yet cannot see the same in themselves; like the *Lamiæ*, that put on their spectacles when they went abroad, but pulled them off within doors.

It is easie to see faults in others, and as hard to see them in our selves. *Jehu*

was zealous against *Baal* and his Priests; because that was *Ahab's* sin; but not against the Calves of *Bethel*, because that was his own sin.

Tecum habita.

This zeal is the true character of an hypocrite; his own Garden is overrun with weeds, while he is busie in looking over his neighbours Pale.

7ly. *There is a sinful zeal*; all the former may be called sinful from some defect; but this I call sinful in a more special notion, because against the life and chief of Religion; it is a zeal against zeal, that flies not at profaness, but at the very power of godliness, not at error, but at truth, and is most hot against the most spiritual and important truths of the times.

Whence else are the sufferings of men for the truth, but from this spirit of zeal against truth?

This may be called a deviliſh zeal; for as there is the faith of devils, so there is the zeal of devils; *therefore his rage is great, because he knows his time is short.*

Jam. 1. 19. Rev. 12. 12.

8ly. *There is a Scriptureless zeal*, that is not butted & bounded by the word, but by some base and low end;

1 Sam. 15. 3

such

such was *Sauls* zeal, when God bids him destroy *Amalek*, & *spare neither man nor beast*; then contrary to Gods command, he spares the best *of the Sheep and Oxen*, under pretence of zeal for Gods Sacrifice.

Another time when he had no such command, then he slayes the *Gibeonites in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.* 2 Sam. 21. 2.

Many a mans zeal is greatest then and there, when and where he hath the least warrant from God.

The true spirit of zeal is bounded by Scripture; for it is for God, & the concernments of his glory: *God* hath no glory from that zeal that hath no Scripture-warrant.

Now then if the zeal of a man in the things of *God*, may be only a blind zeal, or a partial zeal, or a misplaced zeal, or a selfish zeal, or an out-side zeal, or a forensick zeal, or a sinful zeal, or a Scriptureless zeal, then it is evident that a man may be very zealous in the matters of Religion, and yet be but almost a Christian.

12. *A man may be much in prayer, he may pray often, and pray much, and*

yet

Mat 23.13 *yet be but almost a Christian*; so did the *Pharisees*, whom yet our Lord Christ rejects for hypocrites.

Object. But is not a praying frame, an argument of a sincere heart? are not the Saints of God, called, *The generation of them that seek the face of God?* Psal. 24. 6.

Sol. A man is not therefore a Christian, because he is much in prayer. I grant,

That those prayers that are from the workings and sighings of Gods Spirit in us; from a sincere heart lifted to God; from sence of our own emptiness, and Gods infinite fulness;

That are suited to Gods will, the great rule of prayer;

That are for spiritual things more then temporal;

That are accompanied with faith and dependance: Such prayers speak a man *altogether a Christian*. But now a man may be much in prayer, and yet be a stranger to such prayer. As,

1. Nature may put a man upon prayer, for it is a part of natural worship, it may put a child of *God* upon prayer; so it did Christ, *Mat.* 26. 39, 42. *He went and fell on his face, & prayed saying,*

ing, O my father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me. This was a prayer of Chriſt, which flowed from the ſinleſs ſtruglings of Nature ſeeking its own preſervation.

2. A man may pray in pretence for a covering to ſome ſin; ſo did thoſe devout *Phariſees, Mat.* 23. 14. *Wo to you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites; for ye devour widows houſes, & for a pretence make long prayers, therefore ye ſhall receive the great damnation.* So the Papiſts ſeem very devout to pray a rich mans ſoul out of Purgatory, but it is to cheat the Heir of much of his Eſtate, under pretence of praying for his fathers ſoul.

3. A man may pray, & yet love ſin; as *Auſtin*, before *converſion*, pray'd *againſt* his *ſin*, but was afraid *God* ſhould hear him, and take him at his word. Now God hears not ſuch prayers, *Pſ.* 66. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer.*

4. A man may pray much for temporal things, and little for ſpiritual things; and ſuch are the prayers of moſt men, crying out moſt for temporal things: More for, *Who will*

ſhew

2 Tim. 4. 10

Joh. 6. 66.

Psal.4.6. *shew us any good?* then for, *Lord lift upon us the light of thy countenance.* Psal.144.12,13,14,15. *David* Copies out the prayer of such, *Psal.*144.12. *&c. That our sons may be as Plants, and that our daughters may be as corner stones polished after the similitude of a Palace: That our Garners may be full,* &c. *Happy is the people that is in such a Case*: This is the carnal hearts prayer, and this *David* calls Vanity, *ver.*11. *They are strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity.*

5. A man may pray, and yet be far Isa.29.13. from God in prayer; *This people draw nigh to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me,* Mat. 15.8. A man may pray, and yet have no heart in prayer, and that God chiefly looks at: Prov.23.26. *My son, give me thy heart.*

The *Jews* have this sentence written upon the walls of their Synagogues, *Prayer without the intention of the mind, is but a body without a soul.*

It is not enough to be conscionable to use prayer, but we must be conscionable to the use of Prayer.

Many are so conscientious, that they dare

dare not but pray; & yet ſo irreligious, that they have no heart in prayer; a common work of God may make a man conſcionable to do duties, but nothing leſs than ſaving grace in the heart will make a man conſcionable in the doing of them.

6 A mans prayer may be a lye; as a profeſſion without ſanctity, is a lye to the world, ſo prayer without ſincerity, is a lye to God. It is ſaid of *Iſrael*, that they *ſought God, and enquired early after him*; they were much in prayer, and God calls all but a lye. *Neverthleſs they did flatter him with their mouth, & they lyed to him with their tongues, for their heart was not with him*, v. 39, 37. Pſa. 78. 34.

Some derive the Latin *Colo*, to worſhip, from the Greek κολακεύειν, to flatter, and the Engliſh word *flatter*, from the Greek word λατρεύειν, to worſhip.

Hearken to my prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips, ſaith *David*, Pſal. 17. 1.

7. Afflictions & the *preſſures* of outward evils will make a man pray, & pray much, Pſal. 78. 34. *When he ſlew them, then they ſought him, & returned and*

2 Tim. 4. 16

Joh. 6. 66.

Nuper me amici cujudam languor admonuit, optimos esse nos dum infirmissimus. Plin. Ep. 16. l. 7.

& enquired early after God. The Heathen *Mariners* call every man upon his *God* when in a storm; when they fear drowning, then they fall to praying, *Jonah* 1. 5. Mariners are for the most part none of the devoutest, not much addicted to prayer; they will swear twice where they pray once; and yet it is said, *They cry to the Lord in their trouble, Psal.* 107. 23. 28. And hence you have a Proverb, *He that cannot pray, let him go to Sea.*

Qui nescit orare discat navigare.

They poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them, Isa. 26. 16.

Now then, if nature may put a man upon prayer; if a man may *pray* in pretence and design; if a man may pray, & yet *love sin*; if a man may pray mostly for temporal things; if a man may pray, & yet be far from *God* in *prayer*, if prayer may be a *lye*; or if it may be only the *cry* of the *soul* under affliction, sure then a man may be much in prayer, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Object. But suppose a man pray, & prevail with God in prayer, surely that is a witness from heaven of mans sincerity in prayer; now I pray and prevail

vail; I ask and am anſwered.

A man may *pray* & be anſwered; for God many times anſwers prayers in judgment; as God is ſometimes ſilent in mercy, ſo he ſpeaks in wrath; and as he ſometimes denies prayer in mercy; ſo he ſometimes anſwers in judgement: when men are over importunate in ſome things their luſts are upon, and will take no nay, then God anſwers in judgment, *Pſal.* 78. 29. *He gave them their own deſire*; They had deſir'd quails, and God ſends them; but now mark the judgment, *v.*30,31. *While the meat was in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and ſlew them.* *Sol.*

I, but ſuppoſe a mans affections are much ſtirred in prayer, how then? is not that a true note of Chriſtianity? Now my affections are much ſtirred in prayer. *Object.*

So was *Eſau*'s when he ſought the bleſſing, *He ſought it carefully with tears*. A man may be *affected* with his own parts in a *duty*; while good notions paſs through his head, and good words *through* his lips, ſome *good* motions alſo may ſtir in his heart; but they *Sol.* Heb.12.17

they are but sparks which flie out at the tunnel of the Chimney, which suddenly vanish.

So that it is possible a man may pray, and prevail in prayer, pray and be affected in prayer, and yet be but *almost a Christian.*

13. *A man may suffer for Christ in his goods, in his name, in his person, and yet be but almost a Christian.*

Every man that bears Christs Cross on his shoulders, doth not therefore bear Christs Image in his soul.

Object. But doth not our Lord Christ make great promises to them that suffer, or lose any thing for him? doth not he say, Mat. 19. 29. *Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my Names sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life?*

Mat. 19. 29.

Sure they are true Christians whom Christ makes this promise to.

Sol. There is a suffering for Christ, that is a note of sincerity, and shall have its reward:

Mar. 5. 10, 11, 12. That is, when a man suffers for a good cause, upon a good call, & with

a

a good conſcience, for Chriſts ſake, & in Chriſts *ſtrength*: when his ſufferings are a *filling up that which is behind of the ſufferings of Chriſt*; when a man ſuffers as a Chriſtian, as the Apoſtle hath it, 1 *Pet.* 4 6. *If a man ſuffer as a Chriſtian, let him not be aſhamed*; when a man thruſts not himſelf into ſuffering, but ſtayes Gods call, ſuch ſuffering is a proof of integrity. Col. 1. 24. Mat. 14. 28, 29.

But now every ſuffering for Chriſt, is not ſuffering as a Chriſtian. For,

1. A man may ſuffer for Chriſt, for that profeſſion of Religion that is upon him; the World hates the ſhew of Religion; times may come, that it may coſt a man as dear to wear the Livery of Chriſt, as to wear Chriſt himſelf. *Alexander* had like to have loſt his life for the Goſpels ſake, *Act.* 19. 33. yet he was that *Alexander* (as is generally judged) that afterward made *Shipwrack of faith*, and greatly oppoſed *Pauls* Miniſtry. 1 Tim. 1. 19, 20. 1 Tim. 4. 14.

2. A man may ſuffer for Chriſt, and yet have no true love to Chriſt. This is ſuppoſed in 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. *Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits nothing.*

Love

Love to Chriſt is the only noble ground of ſuffering, but a man may ſuffer much upon other ends.

1. Out of opinion of meriting by our ſufferings, as the Papiſts. Or,

2. Out of vain-glory, or for applauſe among profeſſors, ſome have died that their names might live Or,

Vicit amor patriæ laudiſq; immenſa cupido.

3. Out of Roman reſolution or ſtoutneſs of ſpirit.

4. Out of a deſign of profit, as *Judas forſook* all for Chriſt, hoping to mend his market by cloſing with him. Or,

5. Rather to maintain an opinion, than for truths propagation, *Socrates* died for maintaining that there was but one God; but whether he died rather for his own opinion, than for Gods ſake, I think it is no hard matter to determine. Thus a man may ſuffer for profeſſing Chriſt, and yet ſuffer upon wrong principles.

Now then, if a man may ſuffer for Chriſt, from the profeſſion that is upon him; or ſuffer for Chriſt, and yet not truly love him; then a man may ſuffer for Chriſt, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

14. *A man may be called of God, and*

and embrace this call, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Judas is a famous instance of this truth, he was called by *Christ* himself, and came at the call of Christ, and yet *Judas* was but almost a Christian.

But is not the being under the call of God, a proof of our interest in the predestinating love of God? doth not the Apostle say, *whom he predestinated, them he called? Rom.* 8.30. Nay, doth he not say in the same verse, *whom he called, them he justified?* Nay, doth not God call all whom he intends to save? *Object.*

Though God calleth all those that shall be *saved*, yet all shall not be *saved* whom God calleth; every man under the Gospel is called of God in one sense or other, but yet every man under the Gospel shall not therefore be saved. *For many are called, but few are chosen.* Mat. 20.16 *Sol.*

There is a two-fold call of God. { Internal. / External.

1. There is an internal call of God; Now this call is a special work of the Spirit by the Ministry of the Word, whereby a man is brought out of a state

ſtate of nature into a ſtate of grace; Act.26.18 *out of darkneſs into light*; from being *veſſels of wrath*, to be made *heirs of life.*

I grant, that whoever is under this call of God, is called effectually & ſavingly, called to be a *Chriſtian* indeed. Joh.6.45. *Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, comes to me.*

2. There is a call of God which a man may have, and yet not be this call; there is an External call of God, which is by the Miniſtry of the Word.

Now every man that lives under the Preaching of the Goſpel, is thus Mat.22.9. called; God calls every ſoul of you to repent, and lay a ſure foundation for Heaven and Salvation, by the Word you hear this day.

But now every man that is thus called, is not therefore a Chriſtian. For,

1. Many under the call of *God* come to Chriſt, but are not converted to Chriſt, have nothing of the grace and life of Chriſt; ſuch as he, *Mat.*22. who when Chriſt ſent out his ſervants to bid gueſts unto the Marriage, came in at the call of Chriſt, but yet *had*

not

not on the wedding garment, v. 11. that is, had none of the grace and righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt.

2. Many that are under the call of the Goſpel, come to Chriſt, & yet afterwards fall away from *Chriſt*, as *Judas* and *Demas* did; it is ſaid, when Chriſt preached a *Doctrine* which his Diſciples did not like, that *from that time many of his Diſciples went back, and walked no more with him.* 2 Tim. 4. 10. Joh. 6. 66.

Now then, if many are under this external call of God only, if many that come to *Chriſt*, are not converted to *Chriſt*, but fall away from *Chriſt*, then a man may be called of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

15. *A man may have the ſpirit of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.* *Balaam* had the ſpirit of God given him when he bleſſed *Iſrael*, Num. 24. 2. *Balaam ſaw Iſrael abiding in Tents, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.* *Judas* had, for by the Spirit he caſt out Devils, he was one of them that came to Chriſt, and ſaid, *Lord, even the Devils are ſubject to us.* *Saul* had 1 *Sam.* 10. 10. *Behold a company of Prophets met him, & the Spirit of God came*

came upon him, and he propheſied among them.

Object. But you'l ſay, *Can a man have the Spirit of God, and yet not be a Chriſtian?* indeed the Scripture ſaith, *If*
Rom. 8.9. *any man have not the Spirit of Chriſt, he is none of his*, but ſurely if any man have the Spirit of Chriſt, he is his.

Sol. There is a having the Spirit which is a ſure mark of Saintſhip.

Where the ſpirit is as an effectual prevailing principle of grace and ſanctification, renewing and regenerating the heart.

Rom. 8.26 Where the ſpirit is as a potent worker, *helping the Souls Infirmities.*

Joh. 14.16 Where the ſpirit is ſo as to *abide for ever.*

But now every man that hath the ſpirit, hath not the ſpirit in this manner. For,

1. A man may have the ſpirit only tranſiently, not abidingly; the ſpirit may be in a man, and yet not dwell in a man; the ſpirit is where-ever he dwels, but he doth not dwell where ever he is, he is in all, but dwells in Saints only; he is in all, *per divinitatis*

divinitatis præſentiam, but dwells in Saints only *per inhabitationis gratiam*; the Hypocrite may have the Spirit for a ſeaſon, but not to abide in him for ever. *Lumb. 1. ſent. diſt. 17.*

2. A man may *have* the ſpirit, and yet not be *born of the ſpirit*, every true Chriſtian is born of *the ſpirit*; an Hypocrite may have the gifts of the ſpirit, but not the graces; the ſpirit may be in him by way of *illumination*, but not by way of *ſanctification*; by way of *conviction*, but not by way of *converſion*: though he may have much common grace for the good of others, yet he may have no ſpecial grace for the good of himſelf; though his profeſſion be ſpiritual, yet is his ſtate and condition carnal. Joh. 3. 4, 5.

3. A man may have the ſpirit only as a ſpirit of bondage: thus many have the ſpirit working only to bondage. *The ſpirit of bondage is an operation of the holy Ghoſt by the Law, convincing the conſcience of ſin, and of the curſe of the Law, & working in the ſoul ſuch an apprehenſion of the wrath of God, as makes the thoughts of God a terror to him.*

This spirit may be, and often is without saving grace; this operation of the spirit was in *Cain* and *Judas*.

Though none that receive the spirit of *adoption*, but they first receive the spirit of *bondage*; yet many receive the spirit of bondage, that never receive the spirit of adoption.

4. A man may have the Spirit of God working in him, and yet it may be resisted by him; it is said of the Jews, *They rebelled and vexed his holy spirit*; and the same sin is charged upon their children, Acts 7.51 *Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart, ye have alwayes resisted the holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.* Is.63.10.

The Hypocrite retains not the spirit so long as to come up to regeneration and adoption, but quenches the motions of it, and thereby miscarries eternally.

5. A man may have the spirit, and yet sin that unpardonable sin; he may have the Holy Ghost, and yet sin the sin against the Holy Ghost; nay no man can sin this sin against it, but he that hath some degree of it.

The true beleiver hath so much of the

the ſpirit, ſuch a work of it in him, that he cannot ſin that ſin; *he that is born of God ſins not*, to wit, *that ſin unto death*, for that is meant, 1 *John* 5. 16, 17, 18. The carnal profeſſed ſinner, he cannot ſin that ſin, becauſe he is carnal and *ſenſual, having not the ſpirit*. A man muſt have ſome meaſure of the ſpirit, that ſins this ſin, ſo hath the hypocrite, he is ſaid to *be partaker of the holy Ghoſt*, Heb. 6. 4. And he only is capable of ſinning the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. Jude 19.

Now then, if a man may have the ſpirit tranſiently only, not abidingly; if a man may have the ſpirit, and yet not be born of the ſpirit; if he may have the ſpirit only as a ſpirit of bondage; if a man may have the ſpirit working in him, and yet it may be reſiſted by him; if a man may have that ſpirit, and yet ſin that unpardonable ſin againſt it, then ſurely a man may have the ſpirit of God, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian.

16. *A man may have faith, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian; the ſtony ground* (that is, thoſe hearers ſet out by the ſtony ground) *for a while believed* Luk. 8. 13.

Fides minime fides; quippe ex miraculis nata.

believed. It is said, *John* 2.23. *that many believed in the Name of Christ, yet* Christ durst *not commit himself to them*. Though they trusted in Christ, yet Christ would not trust them; and why? *because he knew all men*, ver. 24. He knew they were rotten at root, notwithstanding their Faith; a man may have all faith even to the removing *Mountains*, and yet be *nothing*, 1 *Cor.* 13.2.

Object. But how can this be, that a man may have faith, & yet be but almost a Christian? Doth not our Lord Christ promise life eternal, and salvation to all that beleive? Is not this the Gospel that is to be preached to every creature, *He that believes, shall be saved?* Mark 16.16.

Sol. Though it is true what our Lord Christ saith, that *he that believes, shall be saved*: yet it is as true that many believe that shall never be saved; for *Simon Magus* believed, yea *James* saith, *The Devils believe and tremble*: Jam. 2.19. Now none will say these shall be saved?

2 Thes. 3.2 As it is true, what the Apostle saith, *all men have not faith*, so it is as true,

true, that there are some men have faith, who are no whit the better for their faith.

You must know therfore there is a twofold faith, { *Special & Saving.* / *Common & not saving.*

1. There is a saving faith.

This is called *faith of the operation of God.* Col. 2. 10.

It is a work of Gods own spirit in the soul.

It is such a faith as rests and casts the soul wholly upon Christ, for grace and glory, pardon and peace, sanctification and salvation.

It is an united act of the whole soul, understanding, will and affections, all concurring to unite the soul to an allsufficient Redeemer. Act. 15. 9.

It is such a faith as *purifies the heart*, and makes it clean, it influences and gives strength and life to all other graces.

Now whoever hath this faith, is a Christian indeed; this is the *faith of Gods Elect.* But then, Titus 1. 1.

2. There is a common faith not

saving, a fading and temporary faith; there is the faith of *Simon Magus*, as well as the faith of *Simon Peter*; *Simon Magus* believed, and yet was *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.*

Act. 8. 3. com. with verse 23.

Now *Simon Magus* hath more followers than *Simon Peter*; the faith of most men will at last be found to be no better than the faith of *Simon Magus*. For,

First, The faith of most is but *a temporary faith*, it dures for a while, and then dyes and perisheth; true and saving faith, such as is the *faith of Gods Elect*, cannot dye; it may fail in the Act, but not in the Habit? the sap may not be in the branch, but it is alwayes in the root.

Luk. 22. 32.

That faith that perisheth, that faith a man may have and perish.

Secondly, There is a faith that lies only in generals, not in particulars; as there is a general and particular object of faith, so there is a general and particular faith. The general object of faith is the whole Scripture; the particular object of faith is Christ in the promise.

Now

Now many have a general faith to believe all the Scripture, & yet have no faith to make a particular application of Jeſus Chriſt in the promiſe.

Devils & Reprobates may believe the truth of the Scripture, & what is written of the dying & ſuffering of Chriſt for ſinners; but there are but few that can cloſe up themſelves in the wounds of Chriſt, & by his ſtripes fetch in healing to their ſouls.

Thirdly, there is a faith that is ſeated in the underſtanding, but not in the will; this is a very common faith; many aſſent to the truth.

They believe all the Attributes of God, that he is juſt, holy, wiſe, faithful, good, merciful, &c. But yet they reſt not on him notwithſtanding.

They believe the commands are true, but yet do not obey them; they believe the promiſes are true, but yet do not embrace and apply them; they believe the threatnings are true, but yet do not flee from them.

Thus their faith lies in aſſent, but not conſent; they have faith to confeſs a judgement, but none to take

out execution; by assent they lay a foundation, but never build upon it by application.

They believe that Christ dyed to save them that believe, and yet they believe not in Christ that they may be saved.

Oh my brethren, it *is* not *a believing head*, but *a believing heart* that makes a Christian; *with the heart man believes to righteousness*; without this *our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins.*

Rom. 10. 10.
1 Cor. 15. 17.

Fourthly, There is a faith without experience; many believe the word upon hear-say to be the word of God, but they never felt the power and vertue of it upon their hearts and consciences.

Now what good is it to believe the *truth* of the word, if a mans conscience never felt the *power* of the word? what is it to believe the *truth* of the promise, if we never tasted the *sweetness* of the promise?

We are in this case like a man that believes the description others make of strange Countries, but never travelled them to know the truth; or as a Patient that believes all the Physitian

tian sayes: but yet tryes none of his Potions.

We believe the Word, because we cannot gainsay it; but yet we have no experience of any saving good wrought by the Word, and so are but *almost a Christian.*

Fifthly, There is a faith that is without brokenness of heart, that doth not avail to melt or soften the heart, and therefore is not true faith; for the least true faith is ever joyned with a bending will, and a broken heart.

Sixthly, There is a faith that transforms not the heart; faith without fruit, that doth not bring forth the new creature in the soule, but leaves it in a state of sin and death.

This is a faith that makes a man a *fond professor*, but not a *sound believer*; he believes the truth, but not *as it is in Jesus*; for then it would change and transform him into the likenesse of Jesus. Eph. 4. 21.

He believes that a man must be changed that would be saved, but yet is not savingly changed by believing. Thus while others believe to salvation, he believes to damnation; for *his*

Isa. 56. 9. *Web shall not become a garment, neither shall he cover himself with his work?*

Now then, if a mans faith may be but temporary, or may lie only in generals, or may be seated in the understanding only, or may be without experience, or may be without a broken heart, or without a new heart, surely then, a man may have faith, he may *taste of this heavenly gift*, and Heb. 6. 4. yet be but *almost a Christian*.

17. A man may go further yet, *He may possibly have a love to the people of God, and yet be but almost a Christian*; every kind of love to those who are Saints, is not a proof of our Saintship: *Pharoah* loved *Joseph*, and advanc'd him to the second place in the Kingdom, and yet *Pharoah* was but a wicked man: *Ahab* loved *Jehoshaphat*, and made a league with him, & married his daughter *Athaliah* to *Jehoram*, *Jehoshaphats* son, and yet *Ahab* was a wicked wretch.

Object. But you will say, This seems to contradict the testimony of the Scirpture; for that makes love to the Saints & people of God, a sure proof of our regeneration, and interest in life eternal;

ternal. 1 *Joh.* 3. 14. *We know that we have paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren.* Nay, the Spirit of God putteth this as a Characteriſtical diſtinction between Saints and Sinners, in the tenth *verſe*; *In this the Children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil; whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

By Brethren we do not underſtand *Brethren by place*, thoſe who are of the ſame Country or Nation, ſuch are called Brethren *Rom* 9. 3. *Act.* 7. 23, 25.

Nor do we underſtand *Brethren by race*, thoſe who are deſcended of the ſame Parents: ſuch are called Brethren, *Mat.* 1. 2.

But by Brethren we underſtand *Brethren by grace*, and ſupernatural Regeneration, ſuch as are the children of God; and theſe are the brethren whom to love is a ſure ſign that we are the Children of God. Phil. 16.

To this I Anſwer, That there is a love to the Children of God, which is a proof of our being the Children of God. *Sol.*

As for inſtance, when we love them as ſuch, for that very reaſon, as being the Saints of God; when we love them for the image of God which appeareth in them, becauſe of that grace and holineſs which ſhineth forth in their converſations, this is truly commendable, to love the godly for godlineſs ſake, the Saints for Saintſhip ſake, this is a ſure teſtimony of our Chriſtianity. The *love of grace* in another, is a good proof of the life of *grace* in our ſelves: There can be no better evidence of the Spirit of Chriſt in us, then to love the *Image of Chriſt* in others,

thers For this is a certain truth, that a sinner cannot love a Saint as such; An *Israelite* is an abomination to an *Egyptian*.

There is a contrariety and natural enmity between the two seeds; between the children of the world, and those whom the Father in his eternal love hath chosen out of the World.

Gen. 3. 15.

Joh. 15. 19

Simile simili gaudet.

It is likeness which is the great ground of love; now there is the highest dissimilitude and unlikeness between an unregenerate sinner, and a child of God; and therefore a child of God cannot love a sinner as a sinner, *In whose eys a vile person is contemned*, Psa. 15. 4. He may love him as a creature; he may love his Soul, or he may love him under some relation that he stands in to him. Thus God loves the damned spirits, as they are his creatures, but as fallen Angels he hateth them with an infinite hatred. So to love a sinner *quatenus* a sinner, this a Child of God cannot do; so neither can a sinner love a Child of God as a Child of God. That he may love a Child of God, that I grant, but it is upon some other consideration; he may love a person that is holy, not the person for his holiness, but for some other respect. As,

1. A man may love a Child of God, for his loving, peaceable, courteous deportment to all with whom he converseth. Religion beautifies the conversation of a man, & sets him off to the eye of the world: The grace of God is no friend to a morose, churlish, unmannerly behaviour among men, it provokes in us an affable demeanor and sweetness to all, and where this is found,

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it winneth respect and love from all.

2. A man may love a Saint for his outward greatness and splendor in the World; men are very apt to honour worldly greatness: & therefore the *rich Saint* shall be loved and honoured, whilst the *poor Saint* is hated & despised. This is as if a man should value the goodness of his sword by the Imbroydery of his Belt; or his Horse for the beauty of his trappings rather then for his strength and swiftness. Jam. 2. 2, 3

True love to the *Children of God*, reaches to all the children of God, poor as well as rich, bond as well as free, ignoble as well as noble; for the Image of Christ is a-like amiable & lovely in all.

3. A man may love a child of God for his fidelity and usefulness in his place. Where Religion in the power of it taketh hold of a mans heart, it makes him true to all his betrustments, diligent in business, faithful in all his Relations; and this obligeth Respect. A *carnal* Master may prize a *godly* Apprentice or Servant that makes conscience of pleasing his

his master, and is diligent in promoting his interest.

I might instance in many things of the like nature, as charity, beauty, wit, learning, parts, &c. which may procure love to the people of God from the men of the world: But this love is no proof of charity. For,

First, It is but a *Natural* love, arising from some carnal respect, or self-ends: that love which is made by the Scripture an evidence of our Regeneration, *is a spiritual* love, the principal load-stone & attractive whereof is grace and holiness; it is a love which embraceth *a righteous man in the name of a righteous man.*

Col. 1. 8.

Mat. 10. 41

Eph. 1. 3. 2. A carnall mans love to Saints, is a limited and bounded love, it is not universal, *to all the seed*; Now as in sin, he that doth not make conscience of every sin; maketh conscience of no sin as sin; so he who doth not love all in whom the Image of CHRIST is found, loveth none, for that of the Image of CHRIST which is found in them.

Now then, if the love we bear to the people of God may possible arise from

from natural love only, or from some carnal respect; or if it be a limited love, not extended to all the people of God, then it is possible that a man may love the people of GOD, and yet be no better than *almost a Christian.*

18. *A man may obey the commands of God, yea many of the commands of God, and yet be but almost a Christian.* *Balaam* seems very conscientious of steering his course by the compass of *Gods* command; when *Balak* sent to him to come and curse the people of God, saith *Balaam, If* Balak *would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God,* Numb. 22. 18. and so in the 38. *verse,* saith he, *The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak;* the young man went far in obedience, *Mar.* 10. 20. *All these have I observed from my youth up.* And yet he was but an Hypocrite; for he forsook Christ after all. Num. 23. 12, 20, 26.

But is it not said, *He that hath my Commandements and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my father, and I* Object.

will

will love him, & manifest my self unto him, John 14-21. And doth not our Lord Christ tell us expresly, *ye are my freinds if ye do what I command you*; John 15.14. And can a man be the friend of Christ, and yet be but *almost a Christian*?

Sol. I answer, that there is an obedience to the commands of Christ, which is a sure proof of our Christianity and friendship to Christ.

This obedience hath a three-fold property.

It is { *Evangelical*, *Universal*, *Continual*.

First It is an *Evangelical* obedience, and that both in matter and manner, grouud and end.

In the matter of it, and that is what God requires. *John* 15. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatever I command you.*

In the *manner of it*, and that is according as God requires, *John* 4.24. *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit, and in truth.*

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In the *ground* of it, and that is *a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned*, 1 Tim. 1. 5.

In the end of it, and that is the honour and glory of God; *whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God*, 1 Cor. 10. 13.

Secondly, It is an *universal* obedience, which extendeth it self to all the commands of God alike; it respects the duties of both Tables; such was the obedience of *Caleb, who followed the Lord fully; and of David who had respect to all the commands.* Numb. 14. 24. Psa. 119. 6.

Thirdly It is *a continual obedience*, a putting the hand to Gods plow without looking back; *I have enclined my heart to perform thy statutes alway even to the end*, Psal. 119. 112. *Incipere multorum est, perseverare paucorum.* Bern.

He that thus obeyes the command of God, is a Christian indeed, a friend of Christ indeed; but all obedience to the commands of God, is not this obedience. For,

1. There is a partial obedience, a piece-meal Religion, when a man obeyes God in one command, & not another; owns him in one duty, and not in another; when a man seems

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to make conscience of the duties of one Table, and not of the duties of another. This is the religion of most.

Now this obedience is no obedience; for as he that doth not love God *above all*, doth not love God *at all*; so he that doth not obey *all* the commands *universally*, cannot be said to obey any command *truly*. It is said of those in *Samaria*, that they *feared the Lord, and served their own Gods, after their own manner*, 2 Kings 17.33. And yet in the very next *v.* it is said, *They feared not the Lord*; so that their fear of the Lord was no fear: in like manner that obedience to God is no obedience, which is but a partial and piece-meal obedience.

2. A man may obey much, and yet be in his old nature; and if so, then all his obedience in that estate is but *splendidum peccatum*, a painted sin; *he that offereth an oblation is as if he offered swines blood, and he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an Idol*, Isa. 66.3. The nature must be renewed before the command can be rightly obeyed; for *a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit* Mat. 7.18.

What

Whatever a mans performances are, they cannot be called *obedience*, whilst the heart remaineth unregenerate, because the *Principle* is false and unsound; every duty done by a believer, is accepted of God, as a part of his odedience to the will of God, though it be done in much weakness; because though the believers *hand* is weak, yet his *heart* is right; the Hypocrite may have the most *active hand*, but the believer hath the most *faithfull* and *sincere heart*. Eph. 6. 6. Rom. 6. 17

3. A man may obey the *Law*, and yet have no love to the *law-giver*; a carnal heart may do the command of God, but he cannot love God, and therefore cannot do it aright; for love to God, is the fonudation and spring of all true obedience; every command of God is to be done in love, this is the fulfilling *of the law*, Rom. 13. 10. The Apostle saith, *Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned*; these seem to be acts of the highest obedience; yet *if I have not love, it profits me nothing*, 1 Cor. 13. 3.

4. I might add, that a man may be much

much in obedience from siniſter and baſe ſelfiſh ends, as the *Phariſees prayed much, gave much alms, faſted much*, but our Lord Chriſt tells us that it was *that they might be ſeen of men, and have glory of men*, Mat. 6. 2, 5, 16. Moſt of the Hypocrites Piety empties it ſelf into vain-glory; and therefore he is but an *empty vine* in all he doth, becauſe *he bringeth forth fruit to himſelf*, *Hoſ.* 10. 1.

It is the end that juſtifies the action; indeed *a good end* cannot make a *bad action good*, but yet the want of *a good end*, makes *a good action bad*.

Now then if a man may obey the commands of God partially, and by halves, if he may do it, and yet be in his naturall ſtate; if he may obey the commands of God, and yet not love God; if the ends of his obedience may be ſinful and unwarrantable, then a man may be much in obeying the commands of God, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*.

19. *A man may be ſanctified, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian*; every kind of ſanctification doth not make

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a man a new creature; for many are ſanctified that are never renewed. You read in *Hebr.* 10. 29. of them that count the *blood of the Covenant, wherewith they were ſanctified, an unholy thing.*

But doth not the Scripture tell us, *That both he that ſanctifieth, and they who are ſanctified, are all one; for which cauſe he is not aſhamed to call them brethren*? Heb. 2. 11. And can a man be one with Chriſt, and yet be but *almoſt a Chriſtian*? *Object.*

To this I anſwer, You muſt know there is a twofold work of ſanctification ſpoken of in Scripture. *Sol.*

The one common and ineffectual.

The other, ſpecial and effectual.

That work of *ſanctification* which is true and effectual, is a work of the Spirit of God in the ſoul, enabling it to the *mortifying* of all ſin, to the *obeying* of every command, to *walking* with God in all well-pleaſing. Rom. 8. 13 1 Pet. 1. 2. Heb. 13.

Now whoever is *thus ſanctified*, is one with him *that ſanctifieth*. Chriſt will not be aſhamed to call ſuch *brethren*, for they are *fleſh of his fleſh and bone of his bone*. Eph. 5. 30.

But

But then there is a more common work of sanctification, which is ineffectual as to the two great works of dying to sin, and living to God. Rom. 6. 11 This kind of sanctification may help to restrain sin, but not to mortifie sin; it may lop off the boughs, but it layeth not the axe to the root of the tree; it sweeps and garnishes the room with common vertues, but Mat. 12. 44 doth not adorn it with saving graces; so that a man is but *almost a Christian*, notwithstanding this sanctification.

Or thus, there is an { *Inward* and *Outward* } Sanctification

Inward Sanctification, is that which deals with the soul and its faculties; understanding, conscience, will, memory & affections; Outward sanctification is that which deals with the life and conversation; both these must concur to make a man a Christian indeed; therefore the Apostle puts them together in his prayer for the *Thessalonians*, 1 Thes. 5. 23. *The God of peace sanctifie you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul*

ſoul & body be preſerved blameleſs unto the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

A man is then ſanctified wholly, when he is ſanctified both inwardly and outwardly, both in heart and affections, and in life and converſation. Outward ſanctification is not enough without inward, nor inward without outward; we muſt have both *clean hands, and a pure heart*, Pſal. 24. 4. The heart muſt be pure, that we may not incur blame from within; and the hands muſt be clean, that we may not incur ſhame from without; we muſt have hearts *ſprinkled from an evil conſcience, and bodies waſhed with pure water.* We muſt *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. Inward purity is the moſt excellent, but without the outward it is not ſufficient, the true Chriſtian is made up of both.

Non magna munera, ſed immunis manus, mens que ſincera Deo placent.

Heb. 10. 22

Now many have clean hands, but unclean hearts; they *waſh the outſide of the cup and platter*, when all is filthy within; Now the former without the latter, profiteth a man no more then it profited *Pilate*, who con-

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condemned Christ, to wash his hands
Mat. 27. 24. in the presence of the people; *Manus abluit & Cor polluit*, he washed his hands of the blood of Christ, & yet had a hand in the death of Christ: the *Egyptian* Temples were beautiful on the outside, but within you should find nothing but some Serpent or Crocodile. *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly*, Rom. 2. 28 *Judas* was a *Saint* without, but a *sinner* within; openly a *Disciple*, but
Joh. 6. 70. secretly a *Devil*.

Some pretend to inward sanctity without outward; this is the pretence of the open sinner, Though I sometimes drop an idle foolish word, saith he, or though I sometimes swear an oath, yet I think no hurt, I thank God my heart is as good as the best; such are like the sinner *Moses* mentions that *blessed himself in his heart saying I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst*, Deut. 19. 20.

Some pretend outward sanctity without inward; such are like the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who *outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within*

are full of hypocrisie and iniquity, Mat. 23.28. Fair Professors, but foul sinners.

Inward sanctity, without *outward*, is *impossible*; for it will reform the life; *outward sanctity* without *inward*, is *unprofitable*, for it will not reform the heart; a man is not a true *Christian* without both; the *body* doth not *make* a man without the soul, nor the soul without the body; both are essential to the being of a man; so the sanctification of both, are essential to the being of the *new man*: True sanctification begins at the heart, but works out into the life and conversation; and if so, then a man may attain to an outward sanctification, and yet for want of the inward, be no better than almost a Christian.

20. And so I shall end this long pursuit of the almost Christian in his progress Heaven-ward, with this one general conclusion.

A man may do all (as to external duties and worship) that a true Christian can, and when he hath done all, be but almost a Christian.

You must know all the commands

of God have an *intra* and an *extra*, there is (as I may ſay) the body and the ſoul of the command.

And accordingly there is an *internal* and an *external* Worſhip of God.

Now the *internal* acts of worſhipping of God, are to love God, to fear God, to delight in God, to truſt in God, &c.

The *external* acts of worſhipping God, are by praying, teaching, hearing, &c.

Now there is a vaſt difference between theſe internal and external acts of worſhip (and indeed ſuch a difference there is) that they diſtinguiſh the *altogether*, from the *almoſt* Chriſtian; the ſincere believer from the unſound profeſſor; and indeed in this very thing, the main difference between them doth lie.

1. *Internal* acts of worſhip are good, *propter fieri*, the goodneſs doth adhere intrinſecally to the thing done, a man cannot love God, nor fear God, but it will be imputed to him for a gracious act, and a great part of his holineſs.

But now *external* acts of Worſhip

are not denominated good, ſo much from the matter done, *propter fieri*, as from the manner of doing them, a man cannot ſin in loving and delighting in God, but he may ſin in praying and hearing, &c. for want of a due manner.

2. *Internal* Acts of Worſhip put a goodneſs into *external*; it is our faith, our love, our fear of God, that makes our duties good.

3. They better the heart, and greaten the degrees of a mans holineſs; external duties do not always do this; a man may pray, and yet his heart never the holier; he may hear the Word, and yet his heart never the ſofter; but now the more a man fears God, the wiſer he is, *Prov.* 1.7. the more a man loves God, the holier he is; love is the perfection of holineſs; we ſhall never be perfect in holineſs, till we come to be perfect in love.

4. There is ſuch an excellency in this *internal* worſhip, that he who mixes it with his *external* duties, is a true Chriſtian when he doth leaſt; but without this mixture, he is but

almost a Christian, that doth most.

Internal Acts of worship, joyned with *outward*, sanctifie them, & make them *accepted* of *God*, though few; *external* Acts of Worship without inward, make them abhorred of God, though they be *never so many*.

So that though the almost Christian may do all those duties in hypocrisie, which a true Christian doth in sincerity; nay though in doing external duties, he may out-do the true Christian (as the Comet makes a greater blaze than the true Stars; if *Eliah* fast and mourn, *Baals* Priests will cut their flesh) Yet he cannot do those *internal* duties that the meanest true Christian can, and doth.

The almost Christian can pray, but he cannot love God; he can teach or hear, &c. but he cannot take delight in God.

Mark *Job's* query concerning the Hypocrite, *Will he delight himself in the Almighty?*

Job 27.10 This is *Christianorum propria virtus*

He will *pray* to the *Almighty*, but will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he take pleasure in God?

Ah no! he will not, he cannot.

De-

Delight in *God*, ariſeth from a ſutableneſs between the faculty and the object; now none more unſutable than God and a carnal heart.

Delight ariſes from the having what we *deſire*, and from *enjoying* what we *have*; how then can he delight in *God*, that neither *enjoyeth*, nor *hath*, nor truly *deſireth* God?

Hæc propria eſt delectationis materia, ſi cum habeas quæ deſideraveris, deſideratis perfruaris. Pined. in loc.

Delight in God is one of the higheſt exerciſes of grace; and therefore how can he delight in God, that hath no grace?

Why then ſhould any Saint of *God* be diſcouraged when he hears how far the almoſt Chriſtian may go in the way to Heaven, when as he that is the weakeſt true believer, that hath the leaſt true grace, goes farther than he; for he believes in, and loves God.

Should the *almoſt Chriſtian* do leſs (as to matter of external duties) yet if he had but the leaſt true faith, the leaſt ſincerity of love to Chriſt, he would ſurely be ſaved; and ſhould the true Chriſtian do ten times more duties than he doth, yet had he not faith in Chriſt, & love to Chriſt, he would ſurely be rejected. Oh

Oh therefore let not any weak b liever be discouraged, though Hyp crites may out-do them, and go b yond them in duty; for all the duties are done in Hypocrisie, b your faith and love to God in dutie is a proof of your sincerity.

I do not speak this to discourag any soul in the doing of duties, or t beat down outward performance but to rectifie the soul in the doin of them.

1 Cor. 12. 31. As the Apostle saith, *Covet earnestly the best gifts, but yet I shew unto you a more excellent way*; So I say covet the best gifts, covet to be much in duties, much in prayer, much i hearing, &c. *But yet I shew you more excellent way*, and that is, th way of Faith and love, pray much but then believe much too. Hea much, read much, but then lov God much too. Delight in the wor and ordinances of God much, bu then delight in the God of Ordi nances more.

And when you are most in *duties* as to your *use* of them, Oh then b sure to be above duties, as to you rest

reſting and dependance upon them. Would you be Chriſtians indeed, altogether Chriſtians? Oh then be much in the uſe and exerciſe of Ordinances, but be much more in faith and dependance upon Chriſt and his righteouſneſs; when your obedience is *moſt to the command*, then let your faith be moſt upon the *promiſe*.

The Profeſſor reſts in his duties, and ſo is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*; but you muſt be ſure to reſt upon the Lord Chriſt, this is the way to be *altogether Chriſtians*, for *if ye believe, then are ye* Abrahams *ſeed, and heirs according to the promiſe*.

And thus I have anſwered the firſt Query, to wit, how far may a man go in the way to Heaven, and yet be but almoſt a Chriſtian?

1. He may have much knowledge.
2. He may have great gifts.
3. He may have a high profeſſion.
4. He may do much againſt ſin.
5. He may deſire grace.
6. He may tremble at the word.
7. He might delight in the Word.
8. He may be a member of the Church of Chriſt.

9. He may have great hopes o Heaven.

10. He may be under great an visible changes.

11. He may be very zealous in th matters of Religion.

12. He may be much in Prayer.

13. He may suffer for Christ.

14. He may be called of God.

15. He may in some sense hav the Spirit of God.

16. He may have some kind of faith

17. He may love t e people of God.

18. He may go far in obeying the commands of God.

19. He may be in some sense sanctified,

20. He may do all (as to externa duties) that a true Christian can, and yet be no better than almost a Christian.

The second Question.

Why, or whence is it, that many men go so far, as that they come to be almost Christians?

First, *It may be to answer the call of conscience*; though few men have grace, yet all men have conscience.

Now do but observe, and you shall

see

see how far conscience may go in this work.

1 *Conscience owns a God, and that this God must be worshipped & served by the creature.* Atheists in practice we have many, such as the Apostle speaks of, *Tit.* 1. 16. *They profess they know God, but in works they deny him.*

But Atheists in judgement none can be; *Tully* a Heathen could say, *Nulla gens tam barbara, &c.*

Now there being such a light in conscience, as to discover that there is a God, and that he must be worshipped; by the help of further light, the light of the Word, a man may be enabled to do much in the wayes of God, and yet his heart without a dram of grace.

2. Know this, that *natural conscience is capable of great improvements from the means of grace*; sitting under the Ordinances, may exceedingly heighten the endowments of conscience; though they do not sanctifie conscience, it may be much *regulated*, though it be not at all *renewed*, it may be *enlightned, convinced*, and yet never *savingly converted* and *changed*.

Ye read in *Heb.* 6. 4. of ſome th
were once enlightned, and taſted of th
heavenly gift, and were *made partake*
of the Holy Ghoſt. What work ſhall w
call this? It could not be a ſavin
work, a true change and converſio
of ſtate, for notwithſtanding this in
lightning, & *taſting*, & *partaking*, ye
they are here ſaid to *fall away*. v. 6

Had it been a true work of grace
they could never have fallen awa
from that; a believer may fall, but h
cannot fall away; he may fall fouly,
Deut. 33. 27. but he can never fall finally, for *un-*
derneath are the everlaſting arms; hi
Luk. 22. 32 faith is eſtabliſhed in the ſtrength o
that prayer of Chriſt, that our faith
fail not, nay he tells us expreſly, that
it is eternal life which he gives, from
which *we ſhall never periſh*, Joh. 10. 28.

This work then here ſpoken o
cannot be any ſaving work, becauſe it
is not an *abiding* work, for they that
are under it, are ſaid to fall away from
it; but though it be not a ſaving
work, yet it is a *ſupernatural* work, it
is an improvement made by the
word upon the conſciences of men
through the power of the Spirit; and

there-

therefore they are ſaid *to taſte the good word of God*, and to be made *partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*; they have not the ſpirit abiding in them ſavingly, but ſtriving with them, and working upon them convincingly, to the awakening and ſetting conſcience on work. And conſcience thus ſtirred, may carry a man very far in Religion, and in the duties of the Goſpel, and yet be but a natural conſcience.

A common work of the ſpirit may ſtead a man very much in the duties of Religion, though it muſt be a *ſpecial work* of the ſpirit that ſteads a man to ſalvation; a man may have the *aſſiſting preſence* of the ſpirit, enabling him to preach and pray, and yet he may periſh for want of the *renewing preſence* of the ſpirit enabling him to believe; *Judas* had the former, and yet periſhed for want of the latter; he had the ſpirit aſſiſting him to caſt out Devils, but yet he had not the ſpitit renewing him, for he was caſt out himſelf.

Thus a man may have an *improved* conſcience, and yet be a ſtranger to a renewed conſcience; and conſcience thus.

thus improved, may put a man ver much upon duty.

I pray God none of us mistake *conscience* thus *improved* by the wor for a *conscience* renewed by the spiri the mistake is very easie, especiall when a life of duties is the fruit of it

3. *The conscience of a natural man i subject to distress and trouble*; though natural *conscience* is *not sanctified* wit grace, yet it is often troubled at sin trouble of conscience is not inciden to *believers* only, but sometimes to un believers also. A believers conscienc is sometimes troubled when his sin is truly pardoned; and a natural man conscience is troubled *for* sin, though it is never freed *from* sin. God some times sets the Word home upon the sinners conscience, and applies the terrors of the Law to it, and this fills the soul with fear and horror of death and Hell; now in this case the soul usually betakes it self to a life of duties, meerly to fence trouble out of conscience.

2 Sam. 14. 30, 31. When *Absalom* sets fire on *Joabs* Corn-fields, then he runs to him, though he refused before; so when God.

God lets a ſpark of Hell (as it were) fall upon the ſinners *conſcience* in applying the terrors of the Word, this drives the ſinner to a life of duties, which he never minded before; The ground of many a mans engaging in Religion, is the trouble of his conſcience; & the end of his continuing in Religion, is the quieting of *conſcience*; if conſcience would never check him, *God* ſhould never *hear* from him.

Natural conſcience hath a voice, and ſpeaks aloud many times in the ſinners ears, and telleth him, this ought not to be done, God muſt not be forgotten, the commands of God ought not to be ſlighted; living in ſin will be the ruin of the ſoul; & hence it is that a natural man runs to duties, and takes up a lifeleſs and graceleſs profeſſion, that he may thereby ſilence conſcience. As a man ſick in his ſtomack, what ever ſweet morſel he hath eaten, he brings up all; and although it was ſweet in the eating, yet it is bitter in the riſing.

So it fareth with the ſinner, when he is Sermon-ſick, or conſcience-ſick, though his ſin was ſweet in the

pra-

practice, yet the thought of it riſeth bitter upon the conſcience, and then his profeſſion of Religion is the pill he rouleth about in his mouth, to take away the bitterneſs of ſins taſte.

4. *Natural conſcience inlightned by the Word, may diſcover to a man much of the miſery of a natural ſtate*, though not effectually to bring him out of it, yet ſo as to make him reſtleſs and weary in it; it may ſhew a ſinner his nakedneſs, and hereupon the ſoul runneth to a life of duties, thinking hereby to ſtead the miſery of his caſe, and to make a covering for his nakedneſs. It is ſaid, *Gen.* 3. 7. That when Adam *and* Eve *ſaw they were naked, they ſewed Fig-leaves together, and made themſelves a covering.* So when once the ſinner ſeeth his nakedneſs and vileneſs by reaſon of ſin, whereas he ſhould run to Chriſt, and cloſe with him, and beg his righteouſneſs for a covering, *that the ſhame of his nakedneſs do not appear*, Rev. 3. 18. He rather runneth to a life of duties and performances, and thus maketh himſelf a covering with the fig-leaves of a profeſſion, without

Chriſt

Christ truely embraced, and conscience at all renewed.

Natural man would fain be his own Saviour, and supposeth a change of state to be a thing within his own power, and that the true work of grace lieth in leaving off the practice of sin, and taking up a life of duties; and therefore upon this principle doth many a graceless professor outstrip a sound beleiver; for he resteth in his own performances, and hopeth these will commend him to God.

If a natural conscience may go thus far, then what difference is there between this natural conscience in Hypocrites and sinners, and a renewed conscience in beleivers? Or how may I know whether the workings of my conscience be the workings of nature only, or else of grace wrought in it? Quest.

I grant that it is difficult to distinguish between the one and the other, and the difficulty hath a twofold rise. *Answ.*

1. It ariseth from that Hypocrisie that is in the best Saints, the *weakest beliver* is no *hypocrite*, but yet there is some *hypocrisie* in the *strongest beleiver*;

ver; where there is *most grace*, there is *some sin*; & where there is *most sincerity*, yet there is some *hypocrisie*.

Now it is very incident to a tender conscience, to misgive and mistrust its state upon the sight of any sin; when he sees hypocrisie break out in any duty or performance, then he complains, Surely my aims are not sincere, my *conscience* is not renewed; it is but natural *conscience enlightned*, not by grace *purged and changed*.

Pigmalion made an Image so *lively*, that he deceived himself, and taking the picture for a person, fell in love with the picture.

2. It ariseth from that resemblance there is between *grace* and *hypocrisie*; for *hypocrisie* is a *resemblance* of grace without *substance*, the *likeness* of *grace* without the *life* of grace. There is no grace but an *hypocrite* may have somewhat like it; and there is no duty done by a Christian, but an Hypocrite may out-strip him in it. Now when one that hath not true grace shall go farther than one that hath, this may well make the Believer question whether his grace be true or not; or whether the workings of his conscience be not the workings of Nature only, rather than of grace wrought in it. But to answer the

que-

question. You may make a judgement of this in these 7 particulars.

1. *If a natural mans conscience putteth him upon duty, he doth usually bound himself in the work of God*: his duties are limited, his obedience is a limited *obedience*; he doth one duty, & neglecteth another; he picketh and chuseth among the commands of God, obeyeth one, and slighteth another. Thus much is enough, what need any more? if I do thus and thus, I shall go to Heaven at last.

But now where conscience is renewed by grace, there it is otherwise; Though there may be many weaknesses which accompany its duties, yet that soul never bounds it self in working after *God*; it never *loves* God *so much*, but still it would love him *more*; nor *seeks* him *so much*, but still it would *seek him more*; nor doth it Psl. 119.20. *serve God* so *well* at any time, but still it makes conscience of serving him better. *A renewed conscience is a spring of universal obedience*, Psal. 119.128. for it seeth an *infinite excellency* and *goodness* and holiness in God, and therefore would fain have its ser-

service rise up towards some pr
portionableness to the object; a G
of infinite excellency and goodne
should have infinite love, saith co
science; a holy God should ha
service from a holy heart, saith co
science.

Now then, if I set bounds to m
love to *God*, or to my service to *Go*
if I limit my self in my obedience
the holy God, love one comman
& slight another; obey in one poin
& yet lie cross in another, then is
I do but the working of a *natur*
conscience. But on the other han
if I love the Lord with my *who*
Mar.12.37 *heart*, and *whole soul*, and serve hi
Mar.12.33 with *all my might* and *strength*, *If*
esteem all Gods precepts concerning a
things to be right, and have respect to a
the Commands, then is my love an
service from a *renewed conscience*.

2. *If a natural mans conscience che*
or accuse for sin, then he seeketh to sto
the mouth of it, but not to satisfie it
most of the natural mans duties ar
to still and stifle conscience.

But now the believer chuseth ra
ther to let conscience cry, then to
stop

stop the mouth of it, untill he can do it upon good terms, until he can fetch in satisfaction to it, from the blood of Jesus Christ, by fresh acts of faith, apprehended and applied.

The natural man seeketh to still the noise of conscience, rather then to remove the guilt; the beleiver seeketh the removal of guilt by the application of Christs blood, & then conscience is quiet of it self. As a foolish man, having a mote fallen into his eye, & making it water, he wipeth away the water, and labours to keep it dry, but never searcheth his eye to get out the mote; but a wise man mindeth not so much the wiping, as the searching his *eye*, somewhat is got in, and that causeth the watering, and therefore the cause must be removed.

Now then if when conscience accuseth for sin, I take up a life of duties, a form of godliness to stop the mouth of conscience, and if hereupon conscience be still and quiet, then is this but a *natural conscience*; but if when conscience checks, it will not be satisfied with any thing but the *blood of Christ*, and therefore I use

duties

duties to bring me to Christ; and
beg the sprinkling of his blood u
on conscience, and labour not
much to stop the mouth of it, a
remove guilt *from it*, then is this
renewed conscience.

3. *There is no natural man, let him*
never so far, let him do never so much
matters of Religion, but still he hath
Joh. 12. 6. Dalilah, *his bosom lust. Judas* we
Mar. 6. 20. far, but he carried his *covetousness*
long with him; *Herod* went far, *he*
many things under the force of *Joh*
Ministry, but yet there was one thi
he did not, he did not put away
Brothers Wife, his *Herodias* lay in
Ver. 17, 18 bosom still. Nay commonly all
natural mans duties are to hide so
sin, his profession is only made u
of for a *cover-shame.*

But now the renewed conscien
Psal. 119. 128. hateth all sin, as *David* did, *I ha*
Pf. 66. 18. *every false way*; he *regardeth no iniqu*
ty in his heart; he useth duties, n
to cover sin, but to help work dow
and work out sin.

Now then, if I profess Religion,
I make mention of the Name of th
Rom 2. 23 Lord, *and make my boast of the law,*

ſt; and
lood u
r not
it, as
is this
let him
o much
e hath
dus we
uſneſs
ar, he d
of Job
one thi
away h
ay in h
y all t
de ſon
nade u
nſcienc
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of th
aw, &
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et through breaking the law diſhonour God; if I live in the love of any ſin, nd make uſe of my profeſſion to co- er it, then am I an *hypocrite*, and my uties flow but from a *natural conſci- nce*; but on the other hand, *if I name he name of the Lord Jeſus*, and withal *epart from iniquity*; if I uſe duties, not to cover, but to diſcover and mortifie *ſin*, then am I upright before God, and my duties flow from a *re- newed conſcience*. 2 Tim. 2. 19.

4. *A natural man prides himſelf in his duties*; if he be much in duty, then he is much lifted up under duty; ſo did the *Phariſee*, *Luke* 18. *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are*; and why? where lay the difference? why, *I faſt twice in the week, I give tythes of all, &c.* Luke 18. 11, 12.

But now take a gracious heart, a re- newed conſcience, and when his du- ties are at higheſt, then is his heart at loweſt. Thus it was with the Apoſtle *Paul*, he was much in ſervice, *in ſea- ſon, and out of ſeaſon*, preaching up the Lord Jeſus with all boldneſs and ear- neſtneſs, and yet very humble in a ſenſe of his own *unworthineſs* under 2 Tim. 4. 2.

all,

al, *I am not worthy to be called an Ap*
stle, 1 Cor. 15. 9. *To me who am l*
then the least of all Saints, is this gra
given, that I should preach among t
Gentiles the unsearchable riches
Christ, Eph. 3. 8. and again 1 Tim.
15. *Of sinners I am chief*. Thus a b
leiver when he is highest in dutie
then he is lowest in humility; du
puffeth up the hypocrite, but a Bele
ver comes away humbled; and wh
because the Hypocrite hath had
visions of God, he hath seen only
own gifts and parts, and this *exalte*
him; but the beleiver hath seen *Go*
and enjoyed communion with Go
and this *humbleth* him: Communio
with God, though it be very refre
ing, yet it is also very abasing & hum
bling to the creature. *Hierome* obse
veth on *Zeph.* 1. 1. where it is sai
that *Cushi was the Son of Gedalia*
the son of Amariah. That *Amari*
signifies the *Word of the Lord*, *Gedali*
signifies the *Greatness of the Lord*, a
Cushi is interpreted *humility*, or
Ethiopian.

So that, saith he, *from the Word*
the Lord, cometh a sight of the gre
ne

neſs of the Lord, and from a ſight of the *greatneſs of the Lord*, cometh *humility*.

Now then, if I pride my ſelf in any duty, and am puffed up under my performances, then have I not ſeen or met with God in any duty.

But on the other hand, if when my gifts are at *higheſt*, my heart is at loweſt; if when my ſpirit is moſt raiſed, my heart is then moſt humbled; if in the midſt of all my ſervices I can maintain a ſenſe of my own unworthineſs; if *Cuſhi* be the Son of *Gedaliah*, then have I ſeen and had communion with God in duty, and my performances are from a renewed conſcience.

5. *Look what that is to which the heart doth ſecretly render the glory of a duty, and that is the principle of the duty*; in *Hab.* 1. 16. ye read of them that *ſacrifice to their net, and burn incenſe to their drag*; where the glory of an action is rendred to a mans ſelf, the principle of that action is ſelf: all *Rivers* run into the *Sea*, that is an argument they came from the Sea; ſo when all a mans duties Eccleſ. 1. 7

termi-

terminate in self, then is self the principle of all.

Now all the natural mans duties run into himself; he was never by through work of grace truly cast out of himself, and brought to deny himself, and therefore he can rise no higher than himself in all he doth he was never brought to be *poor in spirit*, and so to live upon another to be carried out of all duties to Jesus Christ.

But the Believer giveth the glory of all his services to God; whatever strength or life there is in duty, God hath all the glory; for he is by grace outed of himself, and therefore seeth no excellency or worthiness in self.

Ps. 115. 1.

I laboured more abundantly than they all, saith the Apostle; but to whom doth he ascribe the glory of this? to self? No, *Yet not I*, saith he, *but the grace of God which was with me*. 1 Cor. 15. 10. When ever the grace of Christ is wrought in the heart as a principle of duty, you shall find the soul when it is most carried out, with a *yet not I* in the mouth of it, *I live*,

yet

yet not I, I laboured more abundantly then all, yet not I; self is disclaimed, and Christ most advanced, when it is from grace that the heart is quickned; the *twenty four Elders cast their Crowns at Christs feet, Rev.* 4. 10. Gal. 2. 20.

There are two things very hard; one is to take the shame of our sins to our selves; the other is to give the glory of our services to Christ.

Now then, *if I sacrifice to my own net*, if I aim at my own credit or profit, and give the glory of all I do to self, then do I sow to the flesh, and was never yet cast out of self, but act only from a natural conscience; but if I give the glory of all my strength and life in duty onely to God, if I magnifie grace in all, and can truly say in all I do, *yet not I*, then am I truly cast out of self, and do what I do with a renewed conscience. Gal. 6. 8.

6. *Though a natural conscience may put a man much upon service, yet it never presseth to the attainment of holiness*; so that he carrieth an unsanctified heart under all; How long was *Judas* a Professor, and yet not one

dram of grace that he had got? *The foolish Virgins* (you know) *took their lamps, but took no oyl in their vessels*, Mat. 25. 3. that is, they looked more after a profession, than after sanctification.

But now when a renewed conscience putteth a man upon duty, it is successed with the growth of holiness; as grace helpeth to the *doing* of duty, so duty helpeth to the *growing* of grace; a Believer is the more *holy*, and the more *heavenly*, by his being much in duties.

Now then, if I am much in a life of duties, and yet a stranger to a life of holiness; if I maintain a high profession, and yet have not a true work of sanctification; if (like children of the Rickets) I grow big in the head, but weak in the feet, then have I gifts and parts but no grace; and though I am much in service, yet have I but a natural conscience; but on the other hand, if the holiness of my conversation carrieth a proportion to my profession, if I am not a *hearer of the Word only*, but a *Doer of it*; if grace groweth in seasons of duty,

then do I act in the things of God from a *renewed conscience.*

7. And lastly, *If a natural conscience be the spring of duty, why then this spring runs fastest at first, and so abateth, and at last dryeth up*; but if a *renewed conscience*, a sanctified heart be the spring of duty, then this spring will never dry up, it will run always, from first to last, and run quicker at last then at first. *I know thy works, and the last to be more than the first*, Rev. 2. 19. *The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands, shall be stronger and stronger*, Job 17. 9.

But you will say, Why doth that man abate and languish in his duties, that doth them from a natural conscience, more then he that doth them from a renewed conscience? *Quest.*

The reason is, because they grow upon a failable root, a decaying root, and that is *nature*; *nature* is a *fading* root, and so are all its fruits *fading*; but the duties done by a *renewed conscience*, are fruits that grow upon a lasting root, and that is Christ; *gifts have their root in nature, but* *Answ.*

grace hath its root in Christ, & there
fore the *weakest grace*, shall out-li
the greatest *gifts and parts*, becau
there is life in the root of one, a
not in the root of the other; gi
and grace differ like the *leather*
your *shoe*, and the *skin* of your *fe*
take a pair of shooes that have t
thickest *soals*, and if you go much
them, the leather weareth out, a
in a little time a mans foot come
to the ground; but now a man t
goeth barefoot all his days, t
skin of his feet doth not wear ou
why should not the soal of his fo
sooner wear out, then the soal
his shooe? for the leather is mu
thicker than the skin; the reason
because there is life in the one, a
not in the other; there is life in
skin of the foot, and therefore t
holdeth out, and groweth thick
and thicker, harder and harder; b
there is no life in the soal of his sho
and therefore that weareth out, a
waxeth thinner and thinner; so it
with gifts and grace.

Now then if I decay, and abate
grow weary of a profession, and

away at last; if *I begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh*, then was all I did from a *natural conscience*; but if I grow and hold out, if I *persevere to the end*, and my *last works be more then my first*, then do I act from a *renewed conscience*.

And thus I have in seven things answered that question, *viz* if conscience may go thus far in putting a man upon duties, then what difference is there between this natural conscience in hypocrites & sinners, and renewed conscience in believers.

And that is the first Answer to the main Query, *viz. Whence is it that many men go so far, as that they come to be almost Christians?*

It is to answer the call of conscience.

Secondly, *It is from the power of the word under which they live*; though the Word doth not work effectually upon all, yet it hath a great power upon the hearts of sinners to reform them, though not to renew them.

1. It hath *vim discriminationis*, a discerning discovering power, *Heb.* 4. 12. *The word of God is quick and*

powerful, sharper then any two-edg Sword, piercing to the dividing a der of soul and spirit, and of the joyn and marrow, and is a discerner of t thoughts and intents of the heart. Th is the glass where every man may s what manner of man he is; as th light of the Sun discovers the litt Moths, so the light of the Wo Jam. 1. 32. shineing into conscience, discove little sins.

2. The Word hath *vim legislativa* the power of a law; it gives law t the whole soul, binds conscience, is therefore frequently called t Psa. 119. 92 Law in Scripture, *unless thy law h* Isa. 8. 20. *been my delight*, &c. *To the law, a to the testimony*, this is spoken of th whole word of God, which is there fore called a law, because of its bin ding power upon the conscience.

3. It hath *vim judicativam*, a judg ing power, *Joh.* 12. 48. *The wo that I have spoken, the same sha judge him at the last day*; the sen tence that God will pass upon sinner hereafter, is no other than wha the Word passeth upon them here the judgment of God is not a di

where

wherein God will pass any new Sentence, but it is such a day wherein God will make a solemn publique Ratification of the judgment passed by the Ministry of the word upon souls here; this I gather clearly from *Mat.* 18. 18. *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven*; so that by bringing a mans heart to the word, and trying it by that, he may quickly know what that sentence is that God will pass upon his soul in the last day; for as the judgment of the word is now, such will the judgment of God be concerning him in the last day.

Indeed there is a twofold power further then this, in the Word.

It hath { *Vim Plasticam*, & *Vim Salvificam.*

A begetting and saving power, but this is put forth only upon some.

But the other is more extensive, & hath a great causality upon a profession of goodness, even among them that have no grace.

A man that is under this threefol power of discerning law and judgment, that hath his heart *ransacked* and discovered, his conscience *bound* and *awed*, his state and sinful condition *judged* and *condemned*, may take up resolution of a new life, and convert himself to a great profession of Religion.

3. *A man may go far in this course of profession from affection of applause and credit, and to get a name in the world*, as it is said of the *Pharisees*. Mat. 6. 5. *They love to pray in the market-places and in the corners of the streets, to be seen of men.*

Many are of *Machiavels* principle, that the appearance of virtue is to be sought; because though the use of it is a trouble, yet the credit of it is a help.

Jerom in his Epistle to *Julian*, calls such *popularis auræ vilia mancipia*, the base *bondslaves* of common fame. Many a man doth that for credit, that he will not do for conscience, and owns Religion more for the sake of a lust then for the sake of Christ, thus making *Gods stream* to turn the *Devils Mill*.

Fourth

Fourthly, *It is from a desire of salvation*; there is in all men a desire of salvation; it is natural to every being to love and seek its own preservation; *who will shew us any good?* Psal. 4. 6. This is the language of nature seeking happiness to its self.

Many a man may be carried so far out in the desires of salvation, as to do many things to obtain it.

So did the young man, *Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* he went far, and did much, obeyed many commands, and all out of a desire of salvation: so then put these together, and there is an answer to that question.

The call of Conscience.
The power of the Word.
The affectation of Credit, and
The desire of Salvation.

These may carry a man so far as to be almost a Christian.

The third question propounded, is this,

Third. *Whence is it that many are but almost Christians, when they have gone thus far? what is the cause of this?* Quest.

I might multiply Answers to this Answ.

question, but I shall instance in th
only, wch I *judge* the most materi
First, *It is for want of right & so*
conviction; if a man be not through
convinced of sin, and his heart tr
broken, whatever his profession
godliness may be, yet he will be
to miscarry; every work of convi
on is not a through work; there
convictions that are only *natural*
rational, but not from the powe
work of the Spirit of God.

Rational conviction what?

Rational conviction, *is that w*
proceeds from the working of a nat
conscience, charging guilt from the l
of nature, by the help of those κόιναι
νοιαι, those common principles of re
that are in all men; This is the co
viction you read of, *Rom.* 2, 14, 15
is said that the *Gentiles* who had
the law, yet had their *consciences be*
ing witness, and accusing, or excus
one another; though they had not
light of Scripture, yet had they con
ction from the *light of nature*; now
the help of the Gospel-light, the
convictions may be much improve
and yet the heart not renewed.

But then there is a spiritual con
&jo

nce in tion, and this is that work *of the* Spiritual
materi *ſpirit of God upon the ſinners heart by* conviction
ght & ſo *the word, whereby the guilt and filth* what?
throug *of ſin is fully diſcovered, and the woe*
heart t *and miſery of a natural ſtate diſtinctly*
ofeſſion *ſet home upon the conſcience, to the dread*
ill be *and terror of the ſinner, whilſt he abides*
f convi *in that ſtate and condition.*
; there And this is the conviction that is a
natura ſound and through work; many have
powe their convictions, but not this *ſpiri-*
d. *tual conviction.*
hat w Now you'l ſay, *Suppoſe I am at any* Query.
a nat time under conviction, how ſhall I know
n the li whether my convictions be only from a
ἐ κόινα natural conſcience, or whether they be
: of rea from the Spirit of God?
: the co I ſhould digreſs too much to draw
.14,15 out the ſolution of this queſtion, to Anſw.
) had n its juſt length; I ſhall therefore in five
nces be things only lay down, the moſt con-
r excuſ ſiderable difference between the one
d not t and the other.
ey con 1. *Natural convictions reach chiefly*
e; now *to open and ſcandalous ſins*, ſins againſt
t, the the light of nature; for *natural con-*
prove *viction* can reach no farther than *na-*
ved. *tural light.*
al con But *ſpiritual conviction* reaches to
&jo

ſecret,

secret, inward and undiscerned sin such as *Hypocrisie, Formality, Lukewarmness, Deadness, and Hardness of heart*, &c.

Observe then, whether your trouble for sin, looks *inward* as well as *outward*; and reaches not only to *open sins*, but to *secret lusts*, to *inward and spiritual sins*; and if so, this is a sure sign of the work of the Spirit, because the trouble occasioned by these sins bears a more immediate relation to the holiness of God, who only is offended by them, they being such as none else can see or know.

2. *Natural convictions deal only with a mans conversation*, not with his state and condition; with sins *actual*, not *original*; but *spiritual convictions* reach to all sins, to sins of heart as well as sins of life; to the sin of our *nature*, as well as the sins of *practice*; to the sin that is *born in us*, as well as the sin that is *done by us*.

Where the Spirit of the Lord cometh to work *effectually* in any soul, he holdeth the glass of the Law before the sinners eyes, & openeth his eye to look into the glass, and to see all

that

that deformity and filthineſs that is in his heart and nature.

The Apoſtle *Paul* ſaid, *I had not known ſin but by the law*, *Rom.*7.7. how can this be true, that he had not known ſin but by the law, when as the light of nature diſcovers ſin? It is ſaid of the Gentiles, *That having not the law, they are a law unto themſelves.* Rom.2.14

This ſin therefore that the Apoſtle ſpeaks of, is not to be *underſtood* of ſin actual, but of ſin original; I had not known the pollution of nature, that fountain of ſin that is within, this I had not known but by the law; and indeed this is a diſcovery that natural light cannot make; it is true the Philoſopher could ſay, πάντων μὲν ἀρχὴ τῶν κακῶν ἐπιθυμία ἐστιν, that luſt is the firſt & chief of all ſins; but I cannot think he meant it of Original ſin, but of the *inordinacy of appetite and deſire* at moſt; for I find that the wiſeſt of the Philoſophers underſtood nothing of original ſin; hear *Seneca*, *Erras ſi tecum vitia naſci putas, ſuperveneruntingeſta ſunt*, ſin is not born with thee, but brought in ſince. *Tam ſine* Timon apud Laertium.

vitio

vitio quam sine virtute nascimur.

Quintilian saith, It is more marvel that any one man sins, than that all men should live honestly; sin is so against the nature of men; how blind were they in this point? and so was *Paul*, till the Spirit of the Lord discovered it to him by the Word. And indeed this is a discovery proper to the spirit. It is he that makes the sinner see all the deformity and filthiness that is within; it is he that pulleth off all the sinners rags, and makes him see his naked and wretched condition; it is he that shews us the blindness of the mind, the *stubbornness* of the will, the *disorderedness* of the affections, the *searedness* of the conscience, the *plague* of our hearts, and the *sin* of our natures, and therein the *desperateness* of our state.

3. *Natural convictions carry the soul out to look more on the evil that comes by sin, than on the evil that is in sin*; so that the soul under this conviction is more troubled at the dread of Hell, and wrath, and damnation, than at the vileness and heinous nature of sin.

But

But now *spiritual convictions* work the soul into a greater sensibleness of the evil that is in sin, than of the evil that comes by sin; the dishonor done to God by walking contrary to his will, the wounds that are made in the heart of Christ, the grief that the Holy Spirit of God is put to, this wounds the soul more than a thousand Hells.

4. *Natural convictions are not durable, they are quickly worn out*; they are like a *slight cut* in the skin, that bleeds a little, and is sore for the present, but is healed again, and in a few dayes not so much as a scar to to be seen.

But *spiritual convictions* are durable, they cannot be worn out, they abide in the soul till they have reached their end (which is the change of the sinner.)

The *convictions* of the spirit are like a *deep wound* in the flesh that goes to the bone, and seems to endanger the life of the Patient, and is not healed but with great skill; and when it is healed, leaves a scar behind it, that when the Patient is well,

well, yet he can say, Here is the mark of my wound, which will never wear out.

So a soul that is under *spiritual conviction*, his wound is deep, and not to be healed, but by the great skill of the heavenly Physitian; and when it is healed, there are the *tokens* of it remaining in the soul, that can never be worn out; so that the soul may say, Here are the marks and signs of my conviction still in my soul.

Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit.

5. *Natural convictions make the soul shy of God*; guilt works fear, and fear causes estrangedness; thus it was Gen. 3. 18. with *Adam*, when he saw his nakedness, he ran away and *hid himself* from God.

Now spiritual convictions drive not the soul from God, but unto God. *Ephraims* conviction was spiritual, & he runs to God, *Turn thou me, and I* Jer. 31. 18. *shall be turned.* So that there is you see, a great difference between *conviction* and *conviction*, between that which is *natural*, and that which is *spiritual*; that which is *common*, and that which is *saving*.

Yea, such is the difference, that though

though a man hath never ſo much of the former, yet if he be without the latter, he is but almoſt a Chriſtian, and therefore we have great reaſon to enquire more after this ſpiritual conviction. For;

1. *Spiritual conviction is an eſſential part of ſound converſion; converſion* begins here; *true converſion* begins in *convictions*, and *true convictions* end in *converſion.*

Till the ſinner be convinced of ſin, he can never be converted from ſin; Chriſts coming was as a Saviour, to dye for ſinners; and the ſpirits coming is to convince us as ſinners, that we may cloſe with *Chriſt* as a Saviour; till ſin be throughly *diſcovered* to us, intereſt in the blood of Chriſt cannot rightly be claimed by us; nay ſo long as ſin is *unſeen*, Chriſt will be *unſought. They that be whole need not the Phyſitian, but they that are ſick.* Mar. 9. 12.

2. *Slight and common convictions*, (when they are but skin-deep) *are the cauſe of much hypocriſie*; *Slight convictions* may bring the *ſoul* to claſp about Chriſt, but not to cloſe with Chriſt, & this is the guiſe of an Hypocrite;

pocrite; I know no other rise and spring of Hypocrisie like this of slight convictions; this hath filled the Church of Christ with Hypocrites.

Nay, it is not only the spring of Hypocrisie, but it is also the spring of Apostasie; what was the cause that *the seed was said to wither away.* Mat. 13. 5, 6. it was because *it had no deepness of earth.* Where there is a through conviction, there is a *depth of earth* in the heart, and there the *Seed of the Word grows*; but where convictions are slight and common, there the seed withers for want of depth; so that you see clearly in this one instance, whence it is that many are but almost Christians, when they have gone so far in Religion, *viz.* for want of sound convictions.

Mat. 13. 5, 6.

Secondly, (And this hath a near relation to the former) *It is for want of a through work of grace first wrought in the heart*; where this is not, all a mans following profession comes to nothing; that *Scholar* is never like to read well, that will needs be in his *Grammar*, before he is

is out of his *Primer*; Cloth that is not wrought well in the Loom, will neither wear well, nor wear long, it will do little service; so that Christian that doth not come well off the Loom, that hath not a through work of grace in his heart, will never wear well, he will shrink in the wetting, and never do much service for *God*; it is not the pruning of a bad tree will make it *bring forth good fruit*; but *the tree must be made good*, before the *fruit* can be *good*, Mat. 12. 33. Mar. 23. 20, 21.

He that takes up a profession of Religion with an unbroken heart, will never serve Christ in that profession with his whole heart.

If there be not a true change in that mans heart, that yet goes far, and doth much in the ways of God, to be sure he will either die an Hypocrite or an Apostate.

Look as in nature, if a man be not well-born, but prove crooked or mishapen in the birth, why he will be crooked as long as he lives; you may boulster or stuff out his cloaths to conceal it, but the crookedness, the

the *deformity* remains still; you may *hide it*, but you cannot *help it*; it may be covered, but it cannot be cured.

So it is in this case, If a man come into a profession of Religion, but be not right born; if he be *not begotten of God*, & *born of the Spirit*; if there be not a through work of grace in his heart, all his profession of Religion will never mend him; he may be boulstered out by a life of duties, but he will be but an *hypocrite at last*, for want of a *through work at first*; a form of godliness may cover his crookedness, but will never cure it.

John 3.5.

A man can never be a true *Christian*, nor accepted of God, though in the highest *profession* of *Religion*, without a work of grace in the heart. For,

1. *There must be an answerableness in the frame of that mans heart (that would be accepted of God) to the duties done by him*; his spirit and affections within must carry a proportion to his profession without; *prayer* without *faith*, obedience to the *law given*, without fear and holy Reverence of the *Law-giver*, God abhors: Acts of *internal* Worship, must answer the duties

duties of *external* Worship.

Now where there is not grace wrought in the heart, there can never be any proportion or answerableness in the frame of that mans heart, to the duties done by him.

2. *Those duties that find acceptance with God, must be done in sincerity.* God doth not take our duties by tale, nor judge of us according to the *frequency of our performances*, but according to the sincerity of our hearts in the performance. It is this that commends both the doer, and the duty to God; with sincerity, God accepts the least we do; without sincerity, God rejects the most we do, or can do; This is that temper of spirit which God highly delights in, *Prov.* 11.20. *They that are of a froward heart, are an abomination to the Lord, but such as are upright in their way are his delight.* 1 Chron. 29.17.

The Apostle gives it a great *Epithete*, he calls it in 2 *Cor.* 1.12. εἰλικρινεία θεῦ, *the sincerity of God*, that is such a sincerity as is his special work upon the soul, setting the heart right and upright before him in all his wayes.

This

This is the crown of all our graces, and the commendation of all our duties; thouſands periſh and go to Hell in the midſt of all their performances and duties, meerly for want of a little ſincerity of heart to God.

Now where there is not a change of ſtate, a work of grace in the heart, there can be no *ſincerity* to God ward, for this is not *quid proveniens a naturâ*, it is not an herb that grows in *natures* garden; the heart of man is naJer. 17. 9. turally *deceitful, and deſperately wicked*, more oppoſite to ſincerity than to any thing: as things corrupted carry a greater diſſimilitude to what they were, than to any thing elſe which they never were.

God made man upright; now man voluntarily loſing this, is become more diſlike to himſelf than to any thing below himſelf; he is more like a Lion, a Wolf, a Bear, a Serpent, a Toad, than to a man in innocency.

So that it is impoſſible to find *ſincerity* in any ſoul, till there be a work of grace wrought there by the Spirit of God; and hence it is that a man is but almoſt a Chriſtian when he hath done all. The

The fourth Question.

4. *What is the reason that many go no farther in the profession of Religion, than to be almost a Christian?*

1. *It is because they deceive themselves in the truth of their own condition*; they mistake their state, and think it *good and safe*, when it is *bad and dangerous*; A man may look upon himself as a Member of Christ, and yet God may look upon him as a Vessel of wrath; as a child of God by looking more upon his *sins*, than his graces, more upon his *failings* than his *faith*, more upon *in-dwelling lusts*, than *renewing grace*, may think his case very bad, when yet it is very good; *I am black*, saith the Spouse, *Cant.* 1. 5. and yet saith Christ, *O thou fairest among women*, v 8. So the sinner by looking more upon his *duties* than his *sins*, may think he sees his *name written in the book of life*, and yet be in the account of God a very Reprobate. *Reas.* 1.

There is nothing more common, than for a man to *think himself something, when he is nothing*, and so *he deceives himself*; many a man blesses Gal. 6. 3. him-

himself in his interest in Christ, when he is indeed a stranger to him; many a man thinks his sin pardoned, when alas he is still in *the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.* Many a man thinks he hath grace, when he hath none; *There is* (saith *Solomon*) *that makes himself rich, and yet hath nothing.* This was the very temper of *Laodicea. Thou sayst I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, & knowest not,* pray mind that *that thou art wretched, and miserable and poor, and blind, and naked.*

Act. 8. 23. Prov. 13. 7. Rev. 3. 17.

Thou knowest not] as bad as she was she thought her state *good*; as poor as she was in grace, she thought she was *rich*; as *miserable and naked* as she was, yet she thought she had *need of nothing.*

Now there are several rises of this mistake.

I'le name five to you.

Supplantativum co præ omni.

First, *The desperate deceitfulness of the heart of every natural man*, Jer. 17. 9. *the heart is deceitful above all things*, the *Hebrew* is עקב הלכ מכל the word (עקב) is the same with *Jacobs* name; now you know how

a supplanter of his brother *Esau*, he is rightly called *Jacob* (saith he) *for he hath supplanted me these two times.* Gen. 27. 36

So the word signifies, to be *fraudulent, subtil, deceitful,* and *supplanting.* Thus is the heart of every natural man, עקב מכל *deceitful above all things.*

Ye read of the deceitfulness of the *Tongue.* Psa. 52. 4.

And of the deceitfulness of *Riches.* Mat. 13. 22

And of the deceitfulness of *Beauty.* Pro. 31. 30

And of the deceitfulness of *Friends.* Job 6. 15.

But yet the heart is deceitful above them all; nay you read of the deceitfulness of Satan; yet truly a mans heart is a greater deceiver then he; for he could never deceive a man, if his own heart did not deceive him. Rev. 20. 3.

Now it is from hence that a man presumes upon the goodness of his case, from the desperate treachery of his own heart.

How common is it for men to boast of the goodness of their hearts! *I thank God, though I do not make such a shew and pretence as some do, yet I have as good a heart as the best.* O do but hear *Solomon* in this case, *he that*

trusteth in his own heart is a fool; Will
Pro.28.26 any wise man commit his money
a Cut-purse? will he trust a Cheat
It is a good rule, μίμνησο ἀπιστεῖν, I
member to distrust; and it was *A*
stins prayer, *Domine libera me a m*
ipso. That man that trusts to his ow
heart, shall be sure to find himself d
ceived at last.

Secondly, This mistake arises fro
the pride of a mans spirit; there i
proud heart in every natural ma
there was much of this pride in *A*
dams sin, and there is much of it in
Adams sons; it is a radical sin, & fro
hence arises this overweaning opi
on of a mans state and condition;
Eccl.7.16. *Iomon* saith, *Be not righteous overmu*
Aug. Sent. 365. *Austin* speaking occasionally of tho
words, saith, It is not *justitia sapient*
but *superbia præsumentis*; not mea
of the righteousness of the wise ma
but of the *pride* of the presumptuo
man. Now in this sense every carn
man is righteous overmuch, thou
he hath none of that righteousne
which commends him to God, (*vi*
the righteousness of Christ) yet h
hath too much of that *righteousne*
whic

which commends him to *himſelf*, and that is *ſelf-righteouſneſs*.

A proud man hath an eye to ſee his *beauty*, but not his *deformity*; his *parts*, but not his *ſpots*; his *ſeeming righteouſneſs*, but not his *real wretchedneſs*.

It muſt be a work of grace that muſt ſhew a man the want of grace. The haughty eye looks upward, but the humble eye looks downward, and therefore this is the believers Motto, *the leaſt of Saints, the greateſt of ſinners*; but the carnal mans Motto is, *I thank God I am not as other men.* Eph. 3. 8. 1 Tim. 1. 15 Luk. 18. 11

Thirdly, *Many deceive themſelves with common grace inſtead of ſaving, through that reſemblance that is between them*; as many take counterfeit money for currant coyn, ſo do too many take common grace for true. *In ſimilibus facilis eſt deceptio. Saul* took the Devil for *Samuel*, becauſe he appeared in the Mantle of *Samuel*; ſo many take common grace for ſaving, becauſe it is like ſaving grace; a man may be under a *ſupernatural* work, & yet fall ſhort of a *ſaving* work; the firſt raiſeth nature, the ſecond onely *reneweth nature*; though every *ſaving* 1 Sa. 21. 14.

work of the spirit be *supernatural*, yet every *supernatural* work of the spirit is not *saving*, & hence many deceive their own souls, by taking a *supernatural work* for a *saving work*.

Fourthly, *Many mistake a profession of Religion for a work of conversion, & an outside reformation, for a sure sign of inward regeneration.* If the outside of the cup be washed, then they think all is clean, though it be never so foul within. This is the common Rock that so many souls split upon, to their eternal hazard, taking up a form of
2 Tim. 3. 5 *godliness, but denying the power thereof.*

Fifthly, *Want of a home application of the Law of God to the heart & conscience, to discover to a man the true state and condition he is in.*

Where this is wanting, a man will sit down short of a true work of grace, and will reckon his case better then it is. That is a notable passage which the Apostle hints concerning himself, *Rom. 7. 9. I was alive without the law once, but when the Commandment came, sin revived, and I dyed.*

Here you have an Account of the different apprehensions *Paul* had of his

his condition, with and without the Word.

1. Here is his apprehenſion of his condition without the Word, *I was alive* (ſaith he) *without the Law*; *Paul* had the law, for he was a a *Phariſee*, and they had the *form of knowledge, and of the truth of the Law*; therefore when he ſaith, he was *without the law*, you muſt not take him literally, but ſpiritually, he was without the power and efficacy of it upon his heart and conſcience, convincing and awakening, and diſcovering ſin; and ſo long as this was his caſe, he doubted not of his ſtate, he was *confident* of the goodneſs of his *condition*; this he hinteth when he ſaith, *I was alive*; but then, Phil. 3. 5, 6. Rom. 2. 20.

2. Here is his apprehenſion of his condition with the word, and that is quite *contrary* to what it was before, *when the Commandment came* (ſaith he) *then ſin revived, and I dyed.*

When the Word of the Lord came with power upon his ſoul, when the Spirit of God ſet it home effectually upon his conſcience, that is meant by *the coming of the Commandment, then ſin revived, & I dyed*; that is, I ſaw the

desperateness of my case, and the filthiness of all my self-righteousness.

Then my hope ceased, and my confidence failed, & as before I thought my self alive, & my sin dead, so when God had awakened conscience by the Word, then I saw my *sin alive & powerful*, and my *self dead and miserable*.

So that this is the first reason why men go no farther in the profession of religion, then to be *almost Christians*. It is because they mistake their state and think it good when it is not, which mistake hath a five-fold-rise.

A deceitful heart.

A proud spirit.

Taking common grace for saving.

Outward Reformation, for true Regeneration.

Want of a home application of the law of God to the heart and conscience.

Reas. 2. 2 *It is from Satans cunning, who if he cannot keep sinners in their open prophaness, then he labours to perswade them to take up with a form of godliness*; if he cannot entice them on in their lusts, with a total neglect of heaven, then he entices them to such a profession as is sure to fall short of heaven.

heaven. He will conſent to the leaving ſome ſin, ſo as we do but keep the reſt; and to the doing ſome duties, ſo as we neglect the reſt: Nay, rather then part with his intereſt in the ſoul, he will yield far to our profeſſion of Religion, and conſent to any thing but our converſion, and cloſing with Chriſt for ſalvation; he cares not which way we come to Hell, ſo as he gets us but thither at laſt.

3. *It is from worldly and carnal poli-* Reaſ. 3.
cy; this is a great hindrance to many; *policy* many times enters *Caveats* againſt *piety*. *Jehu* will not part with *his calves*, leſt he *hazard his Kingdom*.

Among many men there would be more zeal and honeſty, were there leſs deſign and policy. There is an honeſt policy that helps Religion, but carnal policy hinders it.

We are commanded *to be wiſe as ſer-* Mat. 10. 16
pents; now the *ſerpent is the ſubtileſt of* Gen. 3. 1.
creatures; but then we muſt be *innocent as Doves*; if *piety* be *without policy*, it wants *ſecurity*; if *policy* be without *piety*, it wants *integrity*; *piety without policy, is too ſimple to be ſafe; and policy without piety, is too ſubtile to be good.*

Let men be as wise, as prudent, as subtil, as watchful as they will, but then let it be in the way of *God*, let it be joyned with *holiness* and *integrity*.

That is a cursed wisdom that forbids a man to lanch any further out in the depth of Religion, than he can see the land, lest he be taken in a storm, before he can make safe to shore again.

Rest. 4. 4. *There is some lust espoused in the heart, that hinders a hearty close with Christ*; though they bid fair, yet they
Mat. 19. 20. come not to Gods terms; the *young man would have eternal life*, and he bids fair for it, a willing obedience to every command but one; but only one, and will not God abate him one? is he so severe? will he not come down a little in his terms, when man rises so high? must man yield all? will God yield nothing?

No, my brethren, he that underbids for heaven, shall as surely lose it, as he that will give nothing for it; he that will not give all he hath, *part with all*
Mat. 13. 45, 46. *for the pearl of price*, shall as surely go without it, as he that never once cheapens it.

The

The not coming up to Gods terms, is the ruine of thousands of souls; nay, it is that upon which all that perish, do perish; a naked sinner, to a naked Christ; a bleeding broken sinner, to a bleeding broken Christ, these are Gods terms.

Most Professors are like Iron between two equal Loadstones, God draws, & they propend towards *God*, and the world draws, and they incline to the world; they are between both, they would not leave God for the world, if they might not be engaged to leave the world for God.

But if they must part with all, with every lust, every darling, every beloved sin, why then the spirit of *Demas* possesses them, and God is forsaken by them. 2 Tim. 4. 10.

My brethren, this is the great reason why many that are come to be almost Christians, go no farther; some one beloved lust or other hinders them, and after a long and high profession, parts Christ and them for ever; they *did run well*, but here it is that they give out, and after all fall short, and perish to eternity. Gal. 5. 7.

Thus having answered these four questions, *viz.*

1. *How far a man may go in the way to heaven, and yet be but almost a Christian?*

2. *Whence is it that a man goeth so far as to be almost a Christian?*

3. *Whence is it that a man is but almost a Christian, when he hath gone thus far?*

4. *What is the Reason men go no farther in Religion, then to be almost Christians?*

I proceed now to the *Application.*

Infer. 1. 1. *That salvation is not so easie a thing as it is imagined to be;* this is attested by our *Lord Christ* himself, *Mat.* 7. 14. *Strait is the gate, & narrow is the way that leadeth to life, & few there be that find it.* The *gate of conversion is a very strait gate,* and yet every man that would be saved eternally, must enter in at this *strait gate,* for salvation is impossible without it. *Except a man*

Joh. 3. 3. *be born again* (ἀνωθεν, *born from above*) *he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

Not that this gate is strait simply, and in repect of it self; no, for converting grace is free, the *gate of mercy*

stands

stands open all the day long; in the tenders of Gospel-grace, none are excluded, unless they exclude themselves; Mat. 12. 3, 5. *Christ* doth not *say*, if such & such, wil come to me, I will not cast them out, but *him that cometh unto me* (*be he who or what he will, if he hath a heart to close with me*) *I will in no wise cast him out*; he saith not If this or that man will, here is water of life for him, but *if any man will, let him take the water of life freely*. *Christ* grudgeth *mercy* to none: though *salvation* was *dearly purchased for us*, yet it is *freely proffered to us*. Act. 13. 46 Joh. 6. 37. Rev. 22. 17

So that the *gate which leadeth to life*, is not strait on *Christs* part, or in respect of *its self*, but it is *strait* in *respect of us*, because of our lusts & corruptions, wch make the entrance difficult; a *needles eye* is big enough for a thread to pass through, but it is a strait passage for a cable rope; either the *needles eye* must be enlarged, or the *cable rope* must be untwisted, or the entrance is impossible. So it is in this case; the gate of conversion is a very strait passage for a carnal corrupt sinner to go in at; the soul can never pass through with any one lust *beloved* & *espoused*;

and

and therefore the sinner must be untwisted from every lust, he must lay aside the love of every sin, or he can never enter in at this gate, for it is a strait gate. And when he is in at this strait gate, he meeteth with a narrow way to walk in; so our Lord Christ saith, *Narrow is the way that leadeth to life*; and what way is this, but the way of sanctification? *for without holiness, no man shall ever see the Lord.*

Heb. 12.14

Now this way of Sanctification is a very narrow way, for it lies over the neck of every lust, and in the exercise of every grace, subduing the one, and improving the other; dying daily, and yet living daily; dying to sin, and living to God, this is the way of Sanctification: And oh how few are there who walk in this way! the broad way hath many Travellers in it, but this narrow way is like the ways of *Canaan* in the days of *Shamgar*; it is said, *Judg.* 5. 6. *in the days of* Shamgar *the son of* Anath, *the high-ways were unoccupied, & the travellers walked through by-ways*, in the *Hebrew* it is אורחות עקל קלות *through crooked ways*; the *way of holiness* is by the

the most an unoccupied way, so saith the Prophet, *Isa.* 35. 8, 9. *A way shall be there, & it shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it, no Lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, but the redeemed shall walk there*; the unclean, & the Lion, & the ravenous beast, they are in the *crooked ways*; none but the redeemed of the Lord walk in the way of the Lord.

It is no wonder then, that *our Lord* Christ saith of *life*, that *few there be who find it*, when as the *gate is strait*, and the *way narrow* that leadeth to it; many pretend to walk in the *narrow way*, but they never entred in at the *strait gate*; and many pretend to have entred in at the strait gate, but they walk not in the narrow way. *Ad Cœleste Regnum pauci deducuntur.*

It is a very common thing for a man to *perish* upon a mistake of his way, to go on in those paths that take hold of Hell, and yet hope to find Heaven at last; those 20 paths forementioned run into destruction, and yet many chuse them, and walk in them as the way of salvation. As many profane & open sinners perish by chusing *the way*.

way of death, so many formal professors perish *by mistaking the way of life*; this I gather from that our Lord Christ saith, *Few there be that find it*, which doth clearly imply, what in *Luk.* 13.24. he doth plainly express, *viz.* that many seek it, *many seek to enter in, and yet are not able*; many *run far*, & yet do not *so run* as to obtain; many bid fair for the *pearl of price*, and yet go without it; Hell is had with ease, but *the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence*, Mat. 11.12.

1 Cor. 9.24

Facilis descensus Averni; sed revocare gradum, superasq; evadere ad auras, Hic labor, hoc opus est.

Infer. 2. 2. *If many go thus far in the way to heaven, & yet miscarry; oh then what shall be the end of them who fall short of these!* If he shall perish who is *almost a Christian*, what shall he do, who is not *at all a Christian?* If he that owneth Christ, and professeth Christ, and leaveth many sins for Christ, may be damned notwithstanding; what then shall his doom be, who disowneth Christ, and refuseth to part with one sin, one lust, one oath for Christ, nay that *openly* blasphemeth the precious name of Christ? if he that is *outwardly sanctified*, shall yet be eternally rejected, what will the case be of such as are

openly

openly unsanctified, that have not only the *plague* of an *hard heart* within, but also the *plague-sores* of a profane life without? If the *formal professor* must be shut *out*, surely then the *filthy adulterer*, the *swinish drunkard*, the *cheap swearer*, the *profane Sabbath-breaker*, the *foul-mouth'd scoffer*, yea, & every carnal sinner *much more*; if there be a *wo* to him that falleth short of *heaven*, then *how sad* is the *wo* to him who fals short of them that fall short of Heaven? Ah that God would make this an awakening word to sinners that are asleep in sin, without the least fear of death, or dread of damnation!

Are there many in the World, that are *almost*, and yet but *almost Christians?* why *then it is time for us to call our own condition into question, and to make a more narrow scrutiny into the truth of our spiritual estate*; what it is, whether it be right or no; whether we are sound & sincere in our profession of Religion or no. When our Lord Christ told his Disciples, one of you shall betray me, every one began presently to reflect upon himself, *Master is it I? Master is it I?* So should *Use of Examin.*

So should we do, when the Lord discovers to us from his word, how many there are under the profession of Religion that are but almost Christians, we should strait way reflect upon our heart, *Lord is it I?* is my heart unsound? am I but *almost a Christian?* am I one of them that shall miscarry at last? am I a hypocrite under a profession of Religion? have I a form of godliness without the power?

There are 2 *questions* of very great importance, which we should every one of us often put to our selves?

What am I?

Where am I?

1. What am I? am I a child of God or not? am I sincere in Religion, or am I only a hypocrite under a Profession?

2. Where am I? am I yet in a natural state, or in a state of grace? am I yet in the old Root, in old *Adam*, or am I in the Root Christ Jesus? am I in the Covenant of works, that ministers only wrath & death? or am I in the Covenant of grace, that ministers life and peace? Indeed this is the first thing a man should look.

look at; there muſt be a change of ſtate, before there can be a change of heart; we muſt come under a change of Covenant, before we can be under a change of condition: For the *new heart*, & the *new ſpirit* is promiſed in the *new Covenant*; there is nothing of that to be heard of in the *old*; now a man muſt be under the *new Covenant*, before he can receive the Eze. 36. 26. bleſſing promiſed in the *new Covenant*; he muſt be in a *new Covenant* ſtate, before he can receive a *new Covenant heart*; no mercy, no pardon, no change, no converſion, no grace diſpenſed out of Covenant: therefore this ſhould be our great enquiry; for if we know not where we are, we cannot know what we are; and if we know not what we are, we cannot be what we ſhould be, *viz. altogether Chriſtians*. Let me then I beſeech you preſs this duty upon you that are Profeſſors, try your own hearts, *examine your ſelves. whether you are in* 2 Cor. 13. 5. *the faith, prove your own ſouls.* I urge this upon moſt *cogent* Arguments.

1. *Becauſe many reſt in a notion of godlineſs, & outward ſhews of Religion,*

and

Jam.1.22. *& yet remain in their natural condition*; many *are hearers of the Word*, but not *doers of it*, & so *deceive their own souls*; some neither *hear* nor *do*, these are *prophane sinners*; some both *hear* and *do*, these are *true believers*; some *hear*, but they do not *do*, these are *hypocritical professors*.

He that slights the Ordinances, cannot be a *true Christian*; but yet it is possible a man may own them, & profess them, & yet be no true Christian; who would trust to a profession, that shall see *Judas* a Disciple, an Apostle, a Preacher of the *Gospel*, one that casts out Devils, to be cast out himself; *He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that Circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, & circumcision is that*
Rom.2.28 *of the hart, in the spirit, & not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

2. *Because Errors in the first foundation are very dangerous*; If we be not right in the main, in the fundamental work; if the foundation be not laid in grace in the heart, all our following profession *comes* to *nothing*; the house is built upon a sandy foundation, and though

though it may stand for a while, yet *when the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon it, great will be the fall of it.* Mat. 7 27.

3. *Because many are the deceits that our souls are liable to in this case*; there are *many* things like grace, that *are not* grace; now it is the likeness & similitude of things, that deceives, & *makes* one thing to be taken for another. *In similibus facilis est deceptio.*

Many take *gifts* for *grace*, *common knowledge* for *saving knowledge*, when as a man may have great gifts, and yet no grace; great knowledge, and yet not know Jesus Christ.

Some take *common faith* for *saving*, when as a man may believe all the truths of the *Gospel*, all the *promises*, all the *threatnings*, all the Articles of the Creed to be true, and yet perish for want of saving faith.

Some take *morality and restraining grace*, for *piety* and *renewing grace*, when as it is common to have sin much restrained, where the heart is not at all renewed.

Some are deceived with a *half work*, taking *conviction* for *conversion*, *reformation* for *regeneration*: We have many Mermaid Christians. *De-*

Desinit in piscem mulier formosa superne.

Or like *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, head of gold, and feet of clay; The Devil cheats most men by a *Synecdoche*, putting a *part* for the *whole*; partial *obedience* to some commands, for universal obedience to all. Endless are the delusions that Satan fastens upon *souls*, for want of this self-search: It is necessary therefore, that we try our state, lest we take the shadow for the substance, and embrace a cloud instead of *Juno*.

Dan. 2. 32, 33.

4. *Satan will try us at one time or other*; he'l winnow us, and sift us to the bottom, & if we now rest in a *groundless confidence*, it will then end in a *comfortless despair*.

Luk. 2. 31.

Nay, God himself will search and try us, at the day of judgment especially; and who can abide that tryal, that never tryes his own heart?

5. *Whatsoever a mans state be, whether he be altogether a Christian or no, whether his principles be sound or no, yet it is good to examine his own heart*; if he find his heart *good*, his principles right & *sound*, this will be matter of *rejoycing*;

Gal. 6. 4.

if

if he finds his heart rotten, his principles false & unsound, the discovery is in order to a renewing; if a man have a disease upon him, & know it, he may send to the physitian *in time*; but what a sad vexation wil it be, not to see a disease till it be past cure? so for a man to be graceless, and not see it till it be too late, to think himself a Christian when he is not, and that he is in the right way to Heaven, when he is in the ready way to Hell, and yet not know it till a death-bed, or a judgment-day confute his confidence; this is the most irrecoverable misery.

These are the grounds upon which I press this duty, of examining our state; Oh that God would help us in the doing this necessary duty.

Youl'l say, *But how shall I come to know whether I am almost, or altogether a Christian?* If a man may go so far, & yet miscarry, how shall I know when my foundation is right, when I am a Christian indeed? *Quest.*

1. *The altogether Christian closes with, & accepts of Christ upon Gospel-terms*; true *union* makes a true Christian: ma- *Answ.*

ny

ny cloſe with Chriſt, but it is upon their own terms; they take him and own him, but not as God offers him. The terms upon which God in the Goſpel offers Chriſt, are, that we ſhall accept of a broken Chriſt with a broken heart, and yet a whole Chriſt with a whole heart.

A broken Chriſt with a *broken heart*, as a witneſs of our *humility*; a *whole Chriſt* with the *whole heart*, as a witnes of our ſincerity. A *broken Chriſt* reſpects his ſuffering for ſin; a broken heart reſpects our ſenſe of ſin; a whole Chriſt includes all his Offices; a whole heart includes all our faculties. Chriſt is a King, Prieſt & Prophet, & all as Mediator; without any one of theſe Offices, the work of ſalvation could *not* have been compleated: As a Prieſt he redeems us, as a Prophet he inſtructs us, as a King he ſanctifies and ſaves us. Therefore the
1 Cor. 1. 30 Apoſtle ſayes, *He is made to us of God, wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification and redemption*; righteouſneſs and redemption flow from him as a Prieſt, wiſdom as a Prophet, ſanctification as a King.

Now

Now many embrace Christ as a *Priest*, but yet they own him not as a *King* and *Prophet*; they like to share in his righteousness, but not *to partake of his holiness*; they would be redeemed *by* him; but *they* would not submit *to* him, *they* would *be* saved *by* his blood, but not submit to his power. Many love the priviledges of the Gospel, but not the duties of the Gospel. Now these are but almost Christians, notwithstanding their close with Christ; for it is upon their own terms, but not upon Gods. The Offices of Christ may be distinguished, but they can never be divided. Luk. 19. 27.

But the true Christian owns Christ in all his Offices; he doth not only close with him as *Jesus*, but as *Lord Jesus*; he sayes with *Thomas*, *My Lord and my God*. He doth not *only* believe in the *merit* of *his death*, but also conforms to the *manner* of his life; as he believes in him, so he lives to him; he takes him for *his wisdom*, as well as for his *righteousness*; for his *sanctification*, as well as his *redemption*. Joh. 20 28

2. *The altogether Christian hath a through work of grace & sanctification wrought*

wrought in the heart, as a spring of duties. Regeneration is a *whole change*;
2 Cor. 5. 17 *All old things are done away, and all things become new*: It is a perfect work as to *parts*, though not as to *degrees*. Carnal men do duties, but they are from an unsanctified heart, & that spoils all. A *new piece of cloth* never
Mat. 9. 16. doth well *in an old garment*, for the *rent is but made worse*. When a mans heart is throughly renewed by grace, the mind savingly enlightned, the conscience throughly convinced, the will truly humbled and subdued, the affections spiritually raised and sanctified; and when mind, and will, and conscience, and affections, all joyn issue to help on with the performance of the duties commanded, then is a man *altogether a Christian.*

3. *He that is altogether a Christian, looks to the manner, as well as the matter of his duties*; not only that they be done, but how they be done. He knows the Christians priviledges lie in *Pronouns*, but his duty in *Adverbs*; it must not be only *bonum*, *good*, but it must be *bene*, that good must be rightly done.

Here

Here the *almost Christian* fails, he doth the same duties that others do for the matter, but he doth them not in the same manner; while he minds the substance, he regards not the circumstance: If he pray, he regards not *faith & fervency* in prayer; if he hear, he doth not mind Christs Rule, *Take heed how ye hear*; if he obeys, he looks not to the frame of his heart in obeying; & therefore miscarries in all he doth; *bonum oritur ex integra causa, malum ex quolibet defectu*, any of these defects spoil the good of every duty. Jam. 5. 16. Luk. 8. 18. Rom. 6. 17

4. *The altogether Christian is known by his sincerity in all his performances*; whatever a man does in the duties of the Gospel, he cannot be a Christian without sincerity. Now the *almost Christian* fails in this; for though he doth much, prays much, hears much, obeys much, yet he is an Hypocrite under all.

5. *He that is altogether a Christian, hath an answerableness within to the law without*; There is a *connaturalness* between the *Word* of *God*, & the *Will* of a *Christian*; his heart is (as it were) the transcript of the Law: the same

holiness that is *commanded* in the Word, is *implanted* in his heart; the same conformity to Christ that is enjoined by the *word of God*, is wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God; the same obedience which the Word requireth of him, the Lord enableth to performe by his grace bestowed on him. This is that which is promised Heb. 9. 10. & 10. 16. in the *New Covenant*, *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts*, Jer. 31. 33. Now the writing his law in us, is nothing else but his working that grace and holiness in us which the Law commandeth, and requireth of us.

In the *Old Covenant Administration*, *God* wrote his *Laws* only upon *tables of stone*, but not upon the heart, and therefore, though God wrote them, yet they broke them; but in the *New Covenant Administration*, God provides new tables, *not tables of stone, but the fleshly tables of the heart*, & writes 2 Cor. 3. 3. his laws there, that there might be νόμος ἔγγραπτος, a law within, answerable to the law without; & this every true Christian hath, so that he may say (in his measure) as our *Lord Christ* did

did, *I delight to do thy will, O my God, thy law is within my heart*; every beleiver hath a light within him, not guiding him to despise and slight, but to prize and walk by the light without him; the word commands him to walk in the light, & the light directs him to walk according to the word. Psa. 40. 8.

Moreover, from this impression of the law upon the heart, obedience & conformity to God becomes the choice & delight of the soul; for holiness is the very *nature* of the *new creature*, so that if there were *no Scripture*, *no Bible* to guide him, yet he would be *holy*, for he hath received *grace for grace*; there is a *work of grace within*, to answer to the *word* of *grace without*. Joh. 1. 16.

Now the *almost Christian* is a stranger to this law of God within; he may have some conformity to the word in outward conversation, but he cannot have this answerableness to the word in inward constitution.

6. *The altogether Christian is much in duty, and yet much above duty*; much in duty in regard of performance, much above duty in regard of dependence: much in duty by obeying, but much

much above duty by believing. He lives in his obedience, but he doth not live upon his obedience, but upon Chriſt and his righteouſneſs.

The almoſt Chriſtian fails in this; he is much in duty, but not above it, but reſts in it; he works for reſt, and he reſts in his works; he cannot come to believe and obey too; if he believes, then he thinks there is no need of obedience, and ſo caſts off that; if he be much in obedience, then he caſts off believing, and thinks there is no need of that. He cannot ſay with *David, I have hoped for thy ſalvation, and done thy Commandments.* Pſa. 119. 166.

The more a man is in duty, and the more above it, the more in doing, and more in beleiving, the more a Chriſtian.

7. *He that is altogether a Chriſtian, is univerſal in his obedience*; he doth not obey one command, and neglect another; do one duty and caſt off another, but he hath reſpect to all the commands; he endeavours to leave every ſin, and love every duty. Pſa. 119. 6

The almoſt Chriſtian fails in this, his obedience is partial and piece-meal;

meal; if he obeys one command, he breaks another; the duties that least cross his lust he is much in, but those that do, he lays aside.

The *Pharisees*, *fasted*, *prayed*, *paid tythes*, &c. but they did not lay aside their covetousness, their oppression, they *devoured Widows houses*, they were *unnatural to Parents*. Mat. 23. 23. Mat. 23. 14

8. *The altogether Christian makes Gods glory the chief end of all his performances*; If he *prays*, or *hears*, or *gives*, or *fasts*, or *repents*, or *obeys*, &c. Gods glory is the main end of all; it is true, he may have somewhat else at hither end of his work, but *God* is at the further end; as *Moses Rod* swallowed up the *Magitians Rods*, so Gods glory is the ultimate end that swallows up all his other ends. Now the *almost Christian* fails in this, his ends are corrupt and selfish; *God* may possibly be at the hither end of his work, but self is at the further end; for he that was never truly cast out of himself, can have no higher end then himself.

Now then examine thy self by these *characters*, put the *question* to thy own soul, dost thou close with *Christ* upon

Gospel-terms? is grace in the heart the principle of thy performances? dost thou look to the manner, as well as the matter of thy duties? dost thou do all in sincerity? is there an answerableness within to the law without? art thou much above duty, when much in duty? is thy obedience universal? Lastly, Is Gods glory the end of all? if so, then art thou not only almost, but altogether a Christian.

2 *Use of caution.* *Oh take heed of being almost, & yet but almost a Christian;* it is a great complaint of *God* against *Ephraim, that he* Hos. 7. 8. *is a cake not turned:* that is, *half-baked,* neither *raw* nor *roasted*, οὔτε ψυχρὸς, οὔτε ζεστὸς, neither cold nor hot, as *Laodicea*, Rev. 3. 17. *Because thou art neither hot nor cold, therefore I will spew thee out of my mouth.*

Neque crudus, neque coctus.

This is a condition of all others is { *Greatly unprofitable.* / *Exceedingly uncomfortable.* / *Desperately dangerous.*

First, *It is greatly unprofitable to be but almost a Christian*; for failing in any one point will ruine us, as surely as if we had never made any attempts for Heaven. It is no advantage to the soul

soul to be almost converted; for the little that we want, spoils the good of all our attainments; we say, as good never a whit, as never the near; *ad nihilum valet quod non valet ad finem suum*: there is no profit in leaving this or that sin, unless we leave all sin; *Herod* heard *John* gladly, and did many things, but he kept his *Herodias*, and that ruined him. *Judas* did many things, *prayed* much, *preached* much, *professed* much, but yet his *covetousness* spoiled all; one sin ruined the young man, that had kept all the commands but one. Thus he *that offends in one point is guilty of all*. That is, that lives willingly and allowedly in any one sin, he brings the guilt of the violation of the whole *law of God* upon his soul, & that upon a twofold account.

Deus non vult cum exceptione coli.

Jam. 2. 10.

1. Because he manifests the same contempt of the authority of God, in the wilful breach of one, as of all.

2. By allowing himself in the breach of any one command, he shews he kept none in obedience and conscience to God; for he that hates sin, as sin, hates all sin; and he that obeys the command as the express

will of God, obeys every command. And for this cauſe, the leaſt ſin willingly, and with allowance lived in, ſpoils the good of all our obedience, and lays the ſoul under the whole wrath of God. One leak in a ſhip may ſink her, though ſhe be tight every where elſe; *Gideon had ſeventy ſons, & but one Baſtard,* & yet that *one Baſtard deſtroyed all his Sons*; ſo may one ſin ſpoil all our ſervices, one luſt beloved may ſpoil all our profeſſion, as that one Baſtard ſlew all the Sons of *Gideon.*

Judg. 8. 30 31. comp. with ch. 9. verſ. 5.

Secondly, *It is exceedingly uncomfortable,* as appears three ways.

1. *In that ſuch a one is hated of God and men;* the world hates him becauſe *of his profeſſion,* and God abhors him becauſe of his *diſſimulation;* the *world* hates him becauſe he *ſeems good,* and God hates him, becauſe *he doth but ſeem ſo.* No perſon that God hates more then the *almoſt chriſtian; I would thou wert either cold or hot, either all a Chriſtian,* or not *at all a Chriſtian.*

Rev. 3. 15. verſ. 6. *Tepida evomere conſuevimus, unde ad vomitum ciendum quidam aqua tepida utuntur.* Druſ.

Becauſe thou art neither cold nor hot, therefore I will ſpew thee out of my mouth. What a loathſom expreſſion doth

doth God here use, to shew what an utter abhorrency there is in him against Lukewarm Christians?

How uncomfortable then must that condition needs be, wherein a man is abhorred both of God and man?

2. *It is uncomfortable in regard of sufferings*; for being *almost a christian*, will bring us into suffering; but being *but almost a Christian*, will never carry us through suffering. In *Mat.* 13. 20, 21. it is said, *He that receiveth the seed into stony ground, the same is he that hears the word, and with joy receives it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.*

There are four things observable in the words.

1. That the stony ground may receive the word with joy.

2. That it may for some time abide in a profession of it, *he dureth for a while.*

3. That this profession will expose to suffering; for mark, persecution is said to arise because of the Word.

4. This suffering will cause an apo-

statizing from profession, for that which is here called offence, is in *Luk.* 8. 13. called falling away, *which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.*

I gather hence, a profession may expose a man as much to suffering, as the power of godliness; but without the power of godliness there is no holding out in a profession under suffering. The *world* hates the shew of godliness, & therefore persecutes it; *the almost Christian, wants the substance, & therefore cannot hold out in it.*

Now this must needs be very uncomfortable; if I profess Religion, I am like to suffer; if I do but profess it, I am never like to endure.

3. *It is uncomfortable in regard of that deceit it lays our hopes under*; to be deceived of our hopes, causeth sorrow as well as shame; he that is *but almost a Christian*, hopes for heaven; but unless he be *altogether a Christian*, he shall never come there.

Now to perish with hope of heaven, to go to hell by the gates of glory; to come to the very door, and then be
Mat. 25. 10 *shut out*, as the *five Virgins were*; to die
in

in the wilderness, within the sight of the promised land, at the very brinks of *Jordan*; this must needs be sad, to come within a stride of the Goale, & miss it, to sink within the sight of harbour; oh how uncomfortable is this?

3. *As it is greatly unprofitable, and exceedingly uncomfortable to be but almost a Christian, so it is desperately dangerous.* For,

1. *This doth* obicem ponere, *it hinders the true work*; a man lies in a fairer capacity for conversion, that lies in open enmity & rebellion, than he that sooths up himself in the formalities of Religion. This I gather from that Parable of the two Sons which our Lord Christ urged to the professing *Scribes* and *Pharises*, Mat. 21. 28. Mat. 21. 28, 10 32.

There was a man had two Sons, and he came to one and said, Go work to day in my Vineyard; he said, *I will not*; *but afterward repented and went.*

And he came to the second, and said likewise; and he said, *I go Sir, but went not.*

The first represents the carnal open sinner, that is called by the word, but refuses, yet afterwards repents & believes.

lieves. The second represents the Hypocritical Professor, that pretends much, but performs little; Now mark how *Christ* applies this Parable, *vers.* 31. *Verily I say unto you, that the Publicans and the Harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.*

And upon this account it is better not to be at all, then to be almost a Christian; for the almost hinders the altogether. It is better (in this regard) to be a sinner without a profession, then to be a Professor without conversion; for the one lies fairer for an inward change, when the other rests in an outward. Our Lord Christ tells the *Scribe*, Mark. 12. 34. *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*, & yet never like to come there. None farther from the Kingdom of *God* then such as are not far from the Kingdom of God. As for instance, when there lies but one lust, one sin between a soul and Christ, that soul is not far from Christ; but now when the soul rests in this nearness to Christ, and yet will not part with that one lust for Christ, but thinks his condition secured, though that lust be

be not ſubdued, who is farther from the Kingdom of God than he?

So our Lord Chriſt tels the young man, *Mar.* 10.21. *One thing thou lackeſt*; why he was very near heaven, near being a Chriſtian altogether, he was almoſt ſaved; he tells Chriſt he had kept all the commands, *v.* 20. He lacked but *one thing*; I ſay, but one thing, but it was a great thing; that *one thing* he lacked was more than *all things* he had, for it was *the one thing neceſſary*, it was a new heart, a work of grace in his ſoul, a change of ſtate, a heart weaned from the world; I, this was the one thing, and he that lacks this one thing, periſhes with his all things elſe. Luke 10. 42.

2. *This condition is ſo like a ſtate of grace, that the miſtake of it for grace is eaſie and common*; and it is very dangerous to miſtake *any thing* for grace, that is not grace; for in that a man contents himſelf, as if it were grace. *Formality* doth often dwell next door to *ſincerity*, and one ſign ſerves both, and ſo the houſe may be eaſily miſtaken, and by that means a man may take up his lodging there, and never

never find the way out again.

What one ſaith of wiſdom, *Multi ad ſapientiam perveniſſent, niſi ſe jam perveniſſe putaſſent*; many might have been wiſe, had they not thought themſelves ſo, when *they* were otherwiſe; The ſame I may ſay of grace; Many a formal Profeſſor might have been a ſincere believer, had he not miſtook his profeſſion for converſion, his duties for graces, and ſo reſted in that for ſincerity, which is but Hypocriſie.

3. *It is a degree of blaſphemy to pretend to grace, & yet have no grace.* I gather this from that, *Rev.* 2 9. *I know the blaſphemy of them which ſay they are Jews and are not.* This place undergoes varieties of conſtructions; *Grotius* and *Pareus* do not make their blaſphemy to lie in their ſaying, *they are Jews and are not*; but to lie in the Reproaches that theſe *Jews* faſtned upon Chriſt, calling him *Impoſtor, Deceiver, one that hath a Devil, &c.*

Brightman goes another way, and ſaith, This was the blaſphemy of theſe *Jews*, they retained that way of wor-

ſhip

ſhip that was abrogated; and thruſt upon God thoſe old *Rites* and *Ceremonies* which Jeſus Chriſt had abo- Col.2.14. liſhed, *and nailed to his Croſs*, by which they overthrew the glory of Chriſt, and denied his coming.

But I conceive the blaſphemy of theſe *Jews* to lie in this, that *they ſaid they were Jews and were not.* A *Jew* here is not to be taken literally and ſtrictly only, for one of the linage of *Abraham*, but it is to be taken *Metonymically*, for a true believer, one of the ſpiritual ſeed of *Abraham*; *He* Rom.2.29. *is a Jew which is one inwardly*; ſo that for a man to ſay he is a *Jew* when he is not, to profeſs an intereſt in Chriſt when he hath none; to ſay he hath grace when he hath none, this Chriſt calls blaſphemy.

But why ſhould Chriſt call this *blaſphemy?* this is *hypocriſie*; but how may it be ſaid to be *blaſphemy?* why, he blaſphemes the great attribute of *Gods omniſciency*; he doth implicitly deny that God ſees and knows our hearts and thoughts; for if a man did believe the Omniſciency of God, that he ſearches the heart, and

ſees,

sees, and knows all within, he would not dare to rest in a graceless profession of godliness; this therefore is blasphemy in the account of Christ.

---Bello pax ea deterior.

4. *It is dangerous to be almost a Christian, in that this stills and serves to quiet conscience.* Now it is very dangerous to quiet conscience with any thing but the blood of Christ; it is bad being at peace, till Christ speaks peace; nothing can truly pacifie conscience, less than that which pacifies God, and that is the blood of the Lord Christ.

Now the almost Christian quiets conscience, but not with the blood of Christ; it is not a peace flowing from Christs *propitiation*, but a peace rising from a *formal profession*; not a *peace* of Christs giving, but a peace of his own making; he silences and bribes conscience with a form of godliness, and so makes it give way to an undoing, soul-destroying peace; he rocks it asleep in the Cradle of duties, & then it is a thousand to one, it never awaketh more till death or judgment.

Ah my brethren, it is better to have *conscience* never quiet, than quieted any

ny way but by *the blood of sprinkling*: a good *conscience* unquiet is the greatest affliction to Saints, and an evil conscience quiet is the greatest judgment to sinners.

5. *It is dangerous to be almost a Christian in respect of the unpardonable sin*; the sin that the Scripture saith, *Can never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come*; I mean, *the sin against the Holy Ghost*; now such are only capable of sinning that sin, as are but almost Christians. Mat. 12. 32

A true believer cannot; the work of grace in his heart, that *seed of God abiding in him*, secures him against it, 1 *Joh.* 3. 9. compared with *Ch.* 5. 16, 17, 18.

The profane, open, ignorant sinner cannot, though he lives daily and hourly in sin, yet he cannot commit this sin; for it must be from an enlightned mind; every sinner under the *Gospel* especially, sins sadly against the Holy Ghost; against the strivings and motions of the Spirit; he *resists the Holy Ghost, but yet this is* not the sin *against the Holy Ghost*. Acts 7. 51.

There must be three ingredients to make up that sin. 1. It

1 It must be wilful, *Heb.* 10 26. *If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin.*

2. It must be against light and convictions, *after we have received the knowledge of the truth.*

3. It must be *destinata malitia*, in *resolv'd malice*; now you shall find all these ingredients in the *sin* of the *Pharisees*, *Mat.* 12. 22 *Christ heals* one that was *possessed with a Devil*, a great work, which all the people wondred at, *v.* 23. But what say the *Pharisees*? see *ver.* 24. *This fellow casteth out Devils by the Prince of Devils*; now that this was *the sin against the Holy Ghost*, is clear; for it was both wilful & malicious, and against clear convictions; they could not but see that he was the Son of God, and that this work was a peculiar work of the Spirit of God in him, & yet they say he wrought by the devil; whereupon Christ charges them with this sin *against the Holy Ghost*, *v.* 31, 32. Now these *Pharisees* were a sort of great Profes-

Blasphemia in Spiritum sanctum ea est qua quis destinatâ malitiâ contra proprium animi sui sensum, spiritus sancti gratiam & virtutem, deiq; gloriam oppugnat. Luc. Brugens. in *Mat.* 12.

Compare this with *Mar.* 3. 28, 29, 30.

Professors; whence I gather this conclusion, That it is the *Professor* of Religion that is the subject of this sin; not the open carnal sinner; not the true believer, but the *formal professor*.

Not the sinner, for he hath *neither light nor grace*; not the believer, for he hath both *light and grace*; therefore the formal professor, for he hath *light, but no grace*. Here then is the great danger of being almost a Christian, he is liable to this dreadful unpardonable sin.

6. *This being but almost a Christian, subjects us to Apostacy*; he that gets no good by walking in the ways of *God*, will quickly leave them, and walk no more in them; this I gather from *Hos.* 14.9. *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, & the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein.*

The just shall walk in them] he whose heart is renewed & made right with God, he shall keep close to God in his wayes.

But the transgressor shall fall therein] the word in the hebrew is, פשעים *peshanghim*,

peshanghim, from a word that signifies *to prevaricate*, so that we may read the words thus; *the ways of the Lord are right, & the just shall walk in them; but he that prevaricates*, that is a Hypocrite in the ways of God, *he shall fall therein.*

An unsound heart will never hold out long in the ways of God, *John* 5. 35. *He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoyce in that light.*

For a season] πρὸς ὥραν, for *an hour*, a short space, and then they left him: It is a notable question *Job* puts concerning the Hypocrite, *Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he alwayes call upon God?* Job 27.10

He may do much, but these two things he cannot do.

He cannot make God his delight.

He cannot persevere in duties, at all times, and in all conditions.

He will be an Apostate at last; the *scab of hypocrisie* usually breaks out in the *plague sore of apostacy*; conversion ground is standing ground, it is *terra firma*; but a graceless *profession* of Religion is slippery ground, and falling ground;

ground; *Julian* the Apoſtate, was firſt *Julian* the Profeſſor. I know it is poſſible a Believer may fall, but yet *he riſes again, the everlaſting arms are underneath*; but when the Hypocrite falls, who ſhall help him up? Pro 24.16 Deu.33. 27.

Solomon ſaith, *Woe to him that is alone when he falls*; that is, without *intereſt* in Chriſt; why, woe to him? *for he hath none to help him up*; if Jeſus Chriſt do not recover him, who can? *David* fell, and was reſtored, for he had one to help him up; but *Judas* fell and periſhed, for he was alone. Ecc'l.4.10.

7. *This being but almoſt a Chriſtian, provokes God to bring dreadful ſpiritual judgments upon a man.*

Barrenneſs is a ſpiritual judgment; now this provokes *God* to give us up to barrenneſs; when Chriſt found the *figtree* that had leaves, but no fruit, he *pronounces* the curſe of barrenneſs upon it; *Never fruit grow on thee more*; and ſo, *Ezek.47. 11. The miry places thereof, & the mariſh places thereof ſhall not be healed, they ſhall be given to ſalt.* Mat.21.19

A ſpirit of deluſion is a ſad judgment; why this is the *almoſt Chriſtians* judgment, that receives the *truth*, but not

in

2 Thess. 2. 10, 11, 12 in the love of it, *because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them strong delusions.*

To lose either light or sight, either Ordinances or eyes, is a great spiritual judgment; why, this is the almost Christians judgment; he that profits not under the means, provokes God to take away either light or sight; either the Ordinances from before his eyes, or else to blind his eyes under the Ordinances.

Luk. 19. 42

To have a hard heart is a dreadful judgment, and there is no Hypocrite but he hath a hard heart.

My brethren, it is a dreadful thing for God to give a man up to spiritual judgments.

Now this being almost a Christian, provokes God to give a man up to spiritual judgments; surely therefore it is a very dangerous thing to be almost a Christian.

8. *Being almost, and but almost Christians, will exceedingly aggravate our damnation*; the higher a man rises under the means, the lower he falls if he miscarries; he that falls but a lit-

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tle short of Heaven, will fall deepest into Hell; he that hath been nearest to conversion, being not converted, shall have the deepest damnation when he is judged. *Capernaums* sentence shall exceed *Sodoms* for severity, because she exceeded *Sodom* in the enjoyment of mercy; she received more from God, she knew more of God, she professed more for God, & yet was not right with *God*, therfore she shall be punished more by God. The higher the rise, the greater the fall; the higher the profession, the lower the damnation; he miscarrieth with a light in his hand, he perisheth under many convictions; and convictions never end but in a sound conversion, as in all Saints: or in a sad damnation, as in all hypocrites; praying ground, hearing ground, professing ground, and conviction ground, is of all, the worst ground to perish upon. Mat. 11. 23, 24.

Now then to sum up all under this Head.

If to be almost a Christian hinders the true work of conversion.

If it be easily mistaken for conversion.

If

If it be a degree of blasphemy
If this be that which quiets conscience.
If this subjects a man to commit the unpardonable sin.
If it layes us liable to Apostacy.
If it provokes God to give us up to spiritual judgements.
And if it be that which exceedingly aggravates our damnation, sure then it is a very dangerous thing to be almost, and but almost a Christian.

A Use of Exhort. *Oh labour to be altogether Christians,* to go farther than *they* who have *gone* farthest, and yet fell short; this is the great counsel of the Holy Ghost, *So run that ye may obtain,* 1 Cor. 9. 24. *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,* 2 Pet. 1. 10.

Need you any motives to quicken you up to this important duty?

Consid. 1. 1. *This is that which is not only commanded by God, but that whereunto all the commands of God tend*; a perfect conformity of heart and life to God, is the sum and substance of all the commands both of the Old and New Testament. As the Harlot was for the *dividing of the child,* so is Satan for dividing the heart; he would have our

1 Kings 3. 16, 26.

love

love and affections shared between Christ and our lusts, for he knows that Christ reckons we love him not at all, unless we love him above all. But God will have all or none. *My Son, give me thy heart*, Pro. 23. 26. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy might*, Deut. 6. 5. Luk. 10. 27.

Look into the Scripture, and see what that is upon which your *only* stands, and you shall find that God hath fixed it upon those great dutys, which alone tend to the perfection of your state as Christians.

God hath fixed your *only* upon believing, *Mat.* 5. 36. *only believe.*

God hath fixed your *only* upon obedience, *Mat* 4. 10. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, & him only shalt thou serve.* Phil. 1. 27. *Only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ*; So that your *only* is fixed by God upon those two great duties of *believing* and *obeying*, both which tend to the perfection of your state as Christians.

Now shall God command, & shall not we obey? Can there be a higher

motive to duty, then the authority of the great God, whose will is the eternal Rule of Righteousness? O let us fear *God and keep his Commandements*, for this is כל־האדם the *totum hominum, the whole duty* of man, so we read it.

Consid. 2. 2. *The Lord Christ is a Saviour throughout, a perfect and compleat mediator*; he hath not shed his blood by halves, nor satisfied the justice of God, & redeemed sinners by halves; No, but he went through with his undertaking, he bore all our sins, and he shed all his blood, he dyed to the utmost, satisfied the justice of God to the utmost, redeemed sinners to the utmost, and now that he is in heaven, he intercedeth to the utmost, and is
Heb. 7. 25. able to save to the utmost.

It is observed that our Lord Christ when he was upon earth, in the days of his flesh, he wrought no *Semiplenam curationem*, no half-cures, but whomsoever they brought to him for healing, he healed them throughout, *Mat.* 14. 35, 36. *They brought unto him all that were diseased, & besought him that they might only touch the hem*

of

of his garment, and as many as touched, were made perfectly whole.

Oh what an excellent Physitian is here! none like him; he cureth { *Infallibly*, *Suddenly*, *Perfectly*.

He cureth *Infallibly*, none ever came to him for healing, that went without it; he never practised upon any that miscarried under his hand.

He cureth *Suddenly*; no sooner is his Garment touched, but his Patient is healed. *The Leper*, Mat. 8. 3. is no sooner touched, but immediately cured; the two blind men, *Mat.* 20. are no sooner touched, but their eyes are immediately opened, *v.* 34. Mar. 1. 31. & 2. 12. Luk. 8. 41.

He cureth *Perfectly*; *as many as were touched, were made perfectly whole.* Mat. 14. 36

Now all this was to shew what a perfect and compleat Saviour Jesus Christ would be to all sinners that would but come to him. They should find healing in his *blood*, vertue in his righteousnes, & pardon for all their sins, what ever they were; look as Christ healed all the diseases of all that came to him when he was on earth, so he pardons all the sins, and healeth all the wounds of all those

ſouls that come to him, now he is in Heaven.

He is a Saviour throughout, and ſhall not we be Saints throughout? ſhall he be altogether a Redeemer, and ſhall not we be altogether Believers? O what a ſhame is this!

Conſid. 3. 3. *There is enough in Religion to engage us to be altogether Chriſtians,* and that whether we reſpect profit or comfort, for grace brings both.

Firſt, *Religion is a gainful thing,* & this is *argumentum cogens*, a compelling motive, that becomes effectual upon all; gain is the *God* whom the world worſhips; what will not men do, what will they not ſuffer for gain? what Journies do many take by Land, what voyages by Sea, through hot and cold, through fair and foul, through ſtorms and ſhine, through day & night, & all for gain! Now there is no calling ſo gainful as this of religion; it is the moſt profitable *employment* we can take up. *Godlines is profitable unto all things*, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. It is μέγας πορισμὸς, a great Revenue; if it be cloſely *followed*, it brings in the greateſt income; indeed ſome men

men are religious for the *worlds* sake, such shall be sure not to gain; but they who are religious for religions sake, shall be sure not to lose, if heaven & earth can recompence them; for *godliness hath the promise both of the life that now is, & of that which is to come.* 1 Tim. 4 8.

Ah who would not be a Christian, when the gain of godliness is so great! many gain much in their worldly calling, but the profit which the true believer hath from one hours communion with *God in Christ*, weigheth down all the gain of the world; cursed be that man who counts all the gain of the world worth one hours communion with Jesus Christ, said that Noble Marques *Galeacius Garacciola*. It is no where said in Scripture; Happy is the man that findeth silver, and the man that getteth fine gold: these are of no weight in the ballance of the Sanctuary; but it is said, *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; for the Merchandize of it is better then the Merchandize of silver, & the gain thereof then fine gold.* Pro. 3. 13, 14.

By wisdom & understanding here,

we are to understand the grace of Christ, and so the Spirit of God interpretethit, *Job* 28. 28. *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

Now of all Merchants, he that trades in this wisdom and understanding, will prove the richest man; one grain of godliness out-weigheth all the gold of *Ophir*; there is no riches, like being rich in grace. For,

1. *This is the most necessary riches*; other things are not so; silver & gold are not so; we may be, and be happy without them; there is but *one thing necessary*, and that is the grace of Jesus Christ in the heart; have this, and have all; want this, and want all.

Luk. 16. 11 2. *It is the most substantial gain*; the things of this world are more *shadow* then *substance*; *pleasure*, *honour*, and *profit*, comprehend all things in this world, and therefore are the carnal mans trinity.

Ambitiosus honos, & opes, & fœda voluptas,
Hæc tria pro trino Numine mundus habet.

1. Joh. 2. 9. The Apostle *John* calls them, *the lust of*

of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, this (saith he) *is all that is in the world*; & truly if this be all, all is nothing; for what is pleasure but a *dream* and *conceit*? what is *honour* but *fancy* and *opinon*? and what is profit, but a *thing of nought*? *Why wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?* Pro. 23. 5. the things of the world have in them no solid subsistence, though folish carnal men call them substance.

דאיכבו *Et non; cuistunt.*

But now grace is a substantial good; so our Lord Christ calls it, *Pro.* 9. 21. *That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance* לחבחיליש *to inherit that which is*; grace is a reality, other things are but shew and fancy.

3. *Godliness is the safest gain*; the gain of worldly things is always with difficulty, but seldom with safety; the soul is often hazarded in the over-eager pursuit of worldly things; nay thousands do pawn, and lose, and damn their precious souls eternally for a little silver and gold, which are but the guts & garbage of the earth. *And what is a man profited to gain the whole world, if he lose his soul?* Mar. 16. 26.

But the gain of godlineſs is ever with ſafety to the ſoul, nay the ſoul is loſt and undone without it, and not ſaved but by the attainment of it; a ſoul without grace, is in a loſt and periſhing condition; the hazard of eternity is never over with us, until the grace of Chriſt Jeſus be ſought by us, and wrought in us.

1 Tim. 6. 17. 4. *Godlineſs is the ſureſt profit*; as it is *ſafe*, ſo it is *ſure*; men make great ventures for the world, but all runs upon uncertainties; many venture much, and wait long, and yet find no return but diſappointment; they ſow much, and yet reap nothing.

But the gain of godlineſs is ſure, *Pro.* 11. 18. *To him that ſoweth righteouſneſs, ſhall be a ſure reward.*

And as the things of this world are uncertain in the *getting*, ſo they are uncertain in the *keeping*.

Non minor eſt virtus quam quærere parta tueri.

If men do not undo us, moths may; if *robbery* doth not, *ruſt* may; if *ruſt* doth not, *fire* may, to wch all earthly Treaſures are incident, as our *Lord Chriſt* teacheth us, *Mat.* 6. 19. *Solomon* limneth

limneth the World with wings, *Pro.* 23. 5. *Riches take themselves wings, and flie as an Eagle towards heaven.* A man may be rich as *Dives* to day, and yet poor as *Lazarus* to morrow; oh how uncertain are all *worldly things!*

Habent non alas passerinas, sed aquilinas.

But now the true treasure of grace in the heart, that can never be lost; it is out of the reach both of *rust* & *robber*; *he that gets the world, gets a good he can never keep; but he that gets grace, gets a good he shall never lose.*

5. *The profit of godliness lieth not only in this world, but in the world to come:* all other profit lieth in this world only; riches and honours, &c. are called this worlds goods, but the riches of godliness is chiefly in the other worlds goods, in the enjoyment of God and Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, among Saints and Angels in glory: Lo, this is the gain of *godliness, such honour have all his Saints.*

1 Tim. 4. 8.

1 Joh. 3. 17.

Psa. 149. 9.

6. *The gain of godliness is a durable & eternal gain:* all this worlds goods are perishing; perishing *pleasures*, perishing *honours*; perishing *profits*, perishing *comforts*; *riches are not for ever*; saith *Job*, *hast thou entred into the*

Job 38. 22.

treaſures of the ſnow? *Gregory* upon theſe words obſerves, that earthly treaſures are treaſures of ſnow; what pains do children take to ſcrape and rowſe the ſnow together, to make a ſnow-ball, which is no ſooner done, but the heat of the Sun diſſolves it and it comes to nothing. Why, the treaſures of worldly men, are but treaſures of ſnow; when death and judgment come, they melt away and come to nothing. *Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteouſneſs delivers from death*, Prov. 11. 4.

You ſee here the great advantage of godlineſs; ſo that if we look at profit, we ſhall find enough in Religion to engage us to be *altogether Chriſtians*. Or,

2. *If we look at comfort*, Religion is the moſt comfortable profeſſion; there are no comforts to be compared to the comforts of grace and godlineſs.

1. *Worldly comfort is only outward*, it is but skin-deep; *in the midſt of laughter the heart is ſorrowful*, Pro. 14. 13. But now the *comfort* that flows from godlineſs is an inward comfort, a ſpi-

ritual

ritual joy, therefore it is called *gladness of heart*, Psa. 4. 7. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart*; other *joy smooths the brow*, but this fills the breast.

2. *Worldly comfort hath a nether spring*; the spring of worldly comfort is in the creature, in some earthly enjoyment, & therefore the comfort of worldly *men* must needs be mixed & muddy; *an unclean fountain cannot send forth pure water*. But spiritual comfort *hath an upper spring*; the comfort that accompanies godliness, flows from the manifestations of the love of God in Christ, from the workings of the blessed spirit in the heart, which is first a *Counsellor*, and then a *Comforter*; And therefore the comforts of the Saints must needs be pure and unmixed comforts, for they flow from a pure Spring. Jam. 3. 11.

3. *Worldly comfort is very fading and transitory; the triumphing of the wicked is but short, and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment*. *Solomon* compares it to the crackling of thorns under a pot, *Eccles.* 7. 6. which is but a blaze, and soon out, so is the comfort of carnal hearts; But now the comfort Job 20. 5.

of

of godliness is a durable and abiding
Joh. 16. 22 comfort; *your heart shall rejoyce, and you joy no man shall take from you.*
The comfort of godliness is lasting, & everlasting, it abides by us { *In Life.* *In Death.* *After Death*

First, *It abides by us in life; grace &*
Phil. i. 2. Col. i. 2. *peace* go together; *godliness* brings forth *comfort* and *peace naturally; the effect of righteousness shall be peace;* it
Isa. 32. 17. is said of the primitive Christians, *they walked in the fear of the Lord, & in the comfort of the Holy Ghost,* Act. 9. 31. Every duty done in uprightness and sincerity, reflects some comfort
Psa. 19. 11. upon the soul; *In keeping the commands there is great reward;* not only for *keeping* of them, but in *keeping* of them; as every *flower*, so every *duty* carries *sweetness* & *refreshing* wth it.

Object. *But who more dejected & disconsolate then Saints & Believers? whose lives are more uncomfortable? whose mouths are more filled with complaints then theirs? if a condition of Godliness and Christianity, be a condition of so much comfort, then why are they thus?*

Sol. That the people of God are oftentimes without comfort, that I grant;

they

they may walk in the dark, and have no light; but this is none of the product of godliness; grace brings forth no such fruit as this; there is a threefold rise and spring of it. Isa. 50. 10.

Sin within.
Desertion } without.
Temptation }

1. *Sin within*; the Saints of God are not all spirit & no flesh, all grace and no sin; they are made up of contrary principles; there is *light and darkness* in the same *mind*; *sin and grace* in the same *will*, *carnal* and *spiritual* in the same *affections*; there is *the flesh lusting against the spirit* in all these; & *too* oft the Lord knows, is the believer led away captive by these warring lusts; so was the holy Apostle himself, *I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me*, Rom. 7. 21. and v. 23. *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, & bringing me into captivity to the law of sin*; and this was that which broke his spiritual peace, & filled his soul with trouble & complaints, as *you* see in v. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!* Gal. 5. 17. Rom. 7. 23

So

So that it is sin that interrupts the peace of *Gods people*; in-dwelling lust stirring & breaking forth, must needs cause trouble & grief in the soul of a believer; for it is as natural for sin to bring forth *trouble*, as it is for *grace* to bring *forth peace*; every sin contracts a new guilt upon the *soul*, & guilt provokes God; & where there is a sense of guilt contracted, and God provoked, there can be *no peace*, no quiet in that soul, till faith procures fresh sprinklings of the blood of Jesus Christ upon the conscience.

2. *Another spring of the believers trouble & disconsolateness of spirit, is the desertions of God*; & this follows upon the *former*; *God* doth sometimes disappear, & hide himself from his people; *verily thou art a God that hidest thy self*, Isa. 45. 15. But the cause of Gods hiding, is the believers sinning, *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, & your sins have hid his face from you*, Isa. 59. 2. In Heaven where there is no sinning, there is no losing the light of Gods countenance for a moment; & if Saints here could serve God without *corruption*, they

Psal. 13. 1.

they should enjoy God without *desertion*; but this cannot be, while we are in this state; remaining lusts will stir and break forth, & then God wil hide his face; and this must needs be trouble, *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*, Psal. 30. 7.

The light of *Gods* countenance shining upon the soul, is the Christians Heaven on this side Heaven, and therfore it is no wonder if the hiding of his face be *looked* upon by the soul as one of the days of hell; so it was by *David*; *The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of Hell gat hold upon me, I found trouble and sorrow.* Psa. 116. 3.

3. *A third spring of that trouble and complaint that brims the banks of the Christians spirit, is the temptations of Satan*, ὁ ἐχθρὸς, he is the great enemy of Saints, & he envieth the quiet and comfort that their hearts are filled with, when his *conscience* is brimmed with horror and terror; & therefore though he knows he cannot destroy their grace, yet he labours to disturb their peace: As the blessed Spirit of God is first a *sanctifier*, & then a *comforter*, working grace in order to Mat. 13. 39.

peace;

peace; so this cursed spirit of hell, is first a *tempter* and then a *troubler*; first perswading to act sin, and then accusing for sin; and this is his constant practice upon the spirits of Gods people; he cannot endure that they should live in the light of Gods countenance, when himself is *doom*'d to eternal, intolerable darkness.

And thus you see whence it is that the people of God are often under trouble and complaint; all arises from these three springs of

Sin within.
Desertions } without.
Temptations }

If the Saints could serve God without sinning, and enjoy God without withdrawing, and resist Satan without yielding, they might enjoy peace and comfort without sorrowing; this must be endeavoured constantly here, but it will never be attained fully but in heaven.

But yet so far as grace is the prevailing principle in the heart, & so far as the power of godliness is exercised in the life, so far the condition of a child of God is a condition of peace; for it

is

it an undoubted truth, *that the fruit of righteousness shall be peace*: But suppose the people of God experience little of this comfort in this life, yet

2. *They find it in the day of death*; grace & holiness will minister unto us then, and that ministration will be peace. A believer hath a two-fold spring of *comfort*, each one emptying it self into his soul in a dying season; one is from above him, the other is from within him; the *spring* that runs comfort from *above* him, is *the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience*; the spring that runs *comfort* from within him, is *the sincerity of his heart in Gods service*; when we lie upon a Death-bed, and can reflect upon our principles, and performances in the service of God, & there find uprightness and sincerity of *heart* running *through* all, this must needs be comfort; it was so to *Hezekiah*, *Remember O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight*, Isa. 38. 3.

Nothing maketh a Death-bed so uneasie and hard, as a life spent in the service of sin & lust; nothing makes

a

a death-bed so soft and sweet, as a life spent in the service of God & Christ. Or put the case the people of God should not meet with this comfort then, yet

3. *They shall be sure to find it after death*; if *time* bring *none* of this fruit to *ripeness*, why yet *eternity* shall; *grace* in time, will be *glory* in eternity; *holiness* now, will be *happiness* then; *whatever it is a man soweth* in this *world*, *that he shall* be *sure* to *reap* in the next *world*;

Gal. 6.7. *He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the*

Gal. 6.8. *flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life*

Rom. 6.23 *everlasting*; When sin shall end in sorrow and misery, holiness shall end in joy & glory; *Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*, Mat. 25.23. Whoever shareth in the *grace* of *Christ*, & conformeth to the life of *Christ* in this *world*, shall share in the joys of Christ in the world to come, & that joy is *joy un-*

1 Pet. 1.18 *speakable, & full of glory*; lo, here is the fruit of godliness; say now if there be not enough in Religion, whether we respect profit or comfort, to engage us to be Christians throughout.

4. *What*

4. *What an entire resignation wicked men make of themselves to their lusts, & shall not we do so to the Lord Christ?* they give up themselves without reserve to the pleasures of sin, & shall we have our reserves in the service of God? they are altogether sinners, & shall not we be altogether Saints? they *run and not faint* in the service of their lusts, and shall we faint, and not run in the service of Christ? shall the servants of corruption have their *ears boared*, at the door-posts of sin, in token of an entire and perpetual service, and shall not we give up our selves to the Lord Christ, to be his for ever? shall others make a *Covenant with hell and death*, and shall not *we joyn our selves to God in an everlasting Covenant that cannot be forgotten? Acrius illi ad perniciem quam nos ad salutem?* shall they take more pains to damn their souls, than we do to save ours; and make more speed to a place of vengeance, than we do to a *Crown of righteousness?*

Consid. 4.

Exo. 21. 6.

Isa. 28. 15.

Jer. 50. 5.

2 Tim 4. 8.

Which do you judge best, to be saved everlastingly, or to perish everlastingly? which do *you* count the best Master,

Master, God or the Devil? Christ or *your* lusts? I know you will determine it on Christs side: Oh then! when others serve their lusts with all their hearts, do *you* serve *Christ* with all *your hearts*; *if the hearts of the sons of men be fully set in them to do evil*, then *much* more let the *hearts* of the sons of *God* be fully set in them to do good.

Eccl. 8. 5. Jer. 3. 5.

Consid. 5. 5 *If ye are not altogether Christians, ye will never be able to appear with comfort before God, nor to stand in the judgment of the last & great day*; for this sad *dilemma* will silence every Hypocrite; If my *commands* were not *holy, just & good*, why didst thou *own them*? if they were *holy, just and good*, why didst thou not obey them? if Jesus Christ was not *worth* the having, why didst thou *profess* him? if he was, then why didst thou not cleave to him, & close with him? If my *ordinances* were not appointed to convert and save souls, why didst thou sit under them, & rest in the performance of them? Or if they were, then why didst thou not submit to the power of *them*? If Religion be not good, why dost thou profess it? if it be *good*, why dost thou not

not practiſe it? *Friend, how cameſt thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?* if it was not a *wedding feaſt*, why didſt thou come at the invitation? if it was, then why didſt thou come without a *wedding garment*? Mat. 22. 12

I would but ask an hypocritical *profeſſor* of the *Goſpel*, what he will anſwer in that day. Verily you deprive *your* ſelves of all poſſibility of *apology* in the *day* of the righteous *judgment* of *God*; it is ſaid of this man that had no wedding garment on, that when Chriſt came and examined him, *he was ſpeechleſs*; he that is *graceleſs* in a day of grace, will be *ſpeechleſs* in a day of judgment; profeſſing Chriſt without a heart to cloſe with Chriſt, will leave our ſouls inexcuſable, and make our damnation unavoidable, and more intolerable. Mat. 11 22

Theſe are the motives to enforce the duty; and oh that God would ſet them home upon your hearts and conſciences, that you might not dare to reſt a moment longer in a half-work, or in being Chriſtians within a little, but that you might be altogether Chriſtians!

But

Query. *But you will ſay poſſibly, how ſhall I do? what means ſhall I uſe, that I may attain to a through work in my heart, that I may be no longer almoſt, but altogether a Chriſtian?*

Anſw. Now I ſhall lay down three Rules of direction, inſtead of many, to further and help you in this important duty, and ſo leave this work to Gods bleſſing.

Direct. 1. Firſt. *Break off all falſe peace of conſcience*; this is the Devils Bond to hold the ſoul from ſeeking after Chriſt. As there is the peace of God, ſo there is the peace of Satan, but they are eaſily known, for they are as contrary as Heaven and Hell, as light and darkneſs.

The peace of God flows from a work of grace in the ſoul, and is the peace of a Regenerate ſtate; but the peace of Satan is the peace of an unregenerate ſtate, it is the peace of death; in the Grave, *Job* ſaith, there is peace, *there the wicked ceaſe from troubling*; ſo a ſoul dead in ſin is full of peace, the wicked one troubleth him not. Job. 3. 17.

The peace of God in the ſoul, is a peace

peace flowing from a removal of guilt by juſtifying grace, *Rom.* 5. 1. *Being juſtified by faith in his blood, we have peace with God*; but the peace of Satan in the ſoul, ariſes and is maintained by a ſtupidneſs of ſpirit, and inſenſibleneſs of guilt upon the conſcience.

The peace of God is a peace *from ſin*, that fortifies the heart againſt it; *The peace of God that paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and* φρουρήσει. *minds through Chriſt Jeſus*, Phil. 4. 7. the more of this peace there is in the ſoul, the more is the ſoul fortified againſt ſin; but the peace of Satan is a peace in ſin; *the ſtrong man armed keeps the houſe, & there all is at peace*, Luk. 11. 21. The Saints peace is a peace with *God*, but not with ſin, the ſinners peace is a peace with ſin; but not with *God*; and this is a peace better broke then kept; it is a falſe, a dangerous, an undoing peace; my brethren, death and judgment will break all peace of conſcience, but only that which is wrought by Chriſt in the Soul, and is the fruit of the blood of ſprinkling; when *he gives quietneſs, who then can make trou-*

trouble? Job 34.29. Now that peace that death will break, why ſhould you keep; who would be fond of that quietneſs which the flames of hell will burn in ſunder? and yet how many travel to hell, through the fools paradiſe of a falſe peace?

Oh break off this peace; for we can have no peace with God in Chriſt, whilſt this peace remains in our hearts; *Intus exiſtens prohibet alienum.* The Lord Chriſt gives no peace to them that will not ſeek it; and that man will never ſeek it, that doth not ſee his need of it; and he that is at peace in his luſts, ſees no need of the peace of Chriſt. The ſinner muſt be wounded for ſin, and troubled under it, before Chriſt will heal his *wounds*, and give him peace from it.

Direct. 2 2. *Labour after a through work of Conviction*; every conviction will not do it; the *almoſt Chriſtian* hath his convictions, as well as the true Chriſtian, or elſe he had never gone ſo far; but they are not ſound and right convictions, or elſe he had gone farther; God will have the ſoul truly ſenſible of the bitterneſs of ſin,

before

before it shall taste the Sweetness of Mercy. The Plow of conviction must go deep, and make deep Furrows in the heart, before God will sow the precious Seed of Grace and Comfort there; that so it may have depth of earth to grow in. This is the constant Method of God, first to shew man his *Sin*, then his *Saviour*; first his *Danger*, then his *Redeemer*; first his *wound*, then his *Cure*; first his own *vileness*, then *Christs Righteousness*. We must be brought to cry out, *unclean, unclean, to mourn for him whom we have pierced*, and then he *sets open* for us a *fountain to wash in for sin, and for uncleanness*, Zach. 12. and the four last Verses, compared with *Zach.* 13. and the first Verse. That is a Notable place, *Job* 33. 17, 28. *He looked upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, He will deliver his Soul from going into the Pit, and his life shall see the light.* The sinner must see the unprofitableness of his unrighteousness, before he profits by *Christs* righteousnes. The *Israelites* are first Numb. 21. 6, 8.

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stung with the *fiery serpent*, & then the *Brazen serpent* is set up. *Ephraim* is first throughly convinced, and then *Gods* Bowels of Mercy work towards him. Thus it was with *Paul*, *Manasseh*, the *Jaylor*, &c. So that this is the unchangeable Method of God in working Grace, to begin with Conviction of sin.

Oh therfore labour for through Conviction; and there are three things we should especially be convinced of.

First, Be *convinced of the evil of sin*, the filthy and heinous Nature of it; this is the greatest evil in the world, it wrongs God, it wounds Christ, it grieves the Holy Spirit, it ruineth a precious Soul; all other Evils are not to be named with this. My Brethren, though to do sin, be the worst work, yet to see sin is the best sight; for sin discovered in its vileness, makes Christ to be desired in his Fulness. But above all, labour to be convinced of the mischief of an unsound Heart; what an abhorring it is to God, what certain ruine it brings upon the soul. Oh think often of the

Hypocrits

Hypocrites Hell, Mat. 14. 50.

Secondly, *Be convinced of the misery and desperate danger of a natural condition*; for till we see the plague of our hearts, and the misery of our state by Nature, we shall never be brought out of our selves, to seek help in another.

Thirdly, *Be convinced of the utter insufficiency and inability of any thing below Christ Jesus, to minister relief to thy soul in this case*: all things besides Jesus Christ are *physitians of no value*; duties, performances, prayers, tears, self-righteousness, avail nothing in this case; they make us like the *troops of Tema*, to *return ashamed* at our disappointment from such *failing brooks*. Job 13. 4. Job 6. 19, 20.

Alas! it is an infinite *righteousness* that must satisfie for us; for it is an *infinite God* that is offended by us. If ever thy sin be pardoned, it is *infinite mercy* that must pardon it; if ever thou be reconciled to God, it is *infinite merit* must do it; if ever thy heart be changed, and thy state renewed, it is *infinite power must effect it*; and if ever thy soul escape hell, and be saved at last, it is *infinite Grace* must save it.

In these three things right and sound conviction lieth, and wherever the Spirit of God worketh these through convictions, it is in order to a true and sound conversion; for by this means the soul is brought under a right qualification for the receiving Christ.

You must know, that a sinner, *qua talis* a sinner, can never come to Christ, for he is dead in sin, in enmity against Christ, an enemy to God, and the grace of God; but there are certain qualifications that come between the souls dead state in sin, and the work of conversion & closing with Christ, whereby the soul is put into a capacity of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. For no man is brought immediately out of his dead state, and made to believe in Jesus Christ; there are *termini mediantes*, some qualifications coming in between; now sound convictions are the right qualificatons for the sinners receiving Christ; *for he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*; that is, such as see themselves sinners, and thereby in a lost condition;

See Norions Ortod. Evangelist. P. 130.

Mat. 9. 12. 13.

tion; so *Luke* expiains it, *The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*; he is *anointed* and *sent* to *bind up the broken hearted, to comfort all that mourn.* Luk. 9. 10. Isa. 61. 1, 2.

Oh therefore if you would be found Christians, get found convictions; ask those that are believers indeed, and they will tell you, had it not been for their convictions, they had never sought after Christ for sanctification and salvation; they will tell you, they had perished if they had not perished; they had been in eternal bondage, but for their Spiritual bondage; had they not been lost as to themselves, they had been utterly lost as to Christ. *Perissem nisi perissem.*

3. *Never rest in convictions, till they end in conversion*: this is that wherein most men miscarry; they rest in their convictions, and take them for conversion; as if sin seen were therefore forgiven, or as if a sight of the want of grace, were the truth of the work of grace. *Direct.* 3.

That is a notable place in *Hos.* 13. 13. *Ephraim is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the*

breaking forth of children. The place of the breaking forth of children is the womb; as the Child comes out of the womb, ſo is converſion born out of the womb of conviction; now when the child ſticks between the womb & the world, it is dangerous, it hazards the life both of mother and child; ſo when a ſinner reſts in conviction, and goes no farther but ſticks *in the place of the breaking forth of children*; this is very dangerous and hazards the life of the ſoul.

You that are at any time under convictions, oh take heed of reſting in them; do not *ſtay long in the place of the breaking forth of Children*; though it is true that conviction is the firſt ſtep to converſion, yet it is not converſion, a man may carry his convictions along with him into Hell.

What is that which troubleth poor creatures when they come to dye, but this? I have not improved my convictions; at ſuch a time I was convinced of ſin, but yet I went on in ſin, in the face of my convictions; in ſuch a Sermon I was convinced of

of such a duty, but I slighted the conviction; I was convinced of my want of Christ, and of the readinesse of Christ to pardon and save, but alas I followed not the conviction.

My brethren, remember this; Slighted convictions are the worst death-bed companions. There are two things especially which above all others make a death-bed very uncomfortable.

1. *Purposes and promises not performed.*

2. *Convictions slighted, and not improved.*

When a man takes up purposes to close with Christ, and yet puts them not into execution; and when he is convinced of sin and duty, and yet improves not his convictions; Oh this will sting and wound at last.

Now therefore, Hath the Spirit of the Lord been at work in your souls? Have you ever been convinced of the evil of sin, of the misery of a natural state; of the insufficiency of all things under heaven to help; of the fulness and righteousness of

Jesus

Jesus Christ, of the necessity of resting upon him for pardon and peace, for sanctification and salvation? have you ever been really convinced of these things? Oh then as you love your own souls, as ever you hope to be saved at last, and enjoy God for ever, improve these convictions and be sure you rest not in them till they rise up to a through close with the Lord Jesus Christ, and so end in a sound and perfect conversion. Thus shall you be not only *almost*, but *altogether Christians*.

FINIS.

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